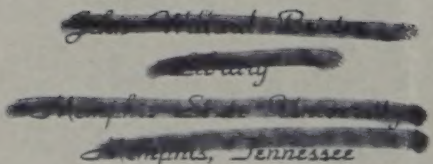
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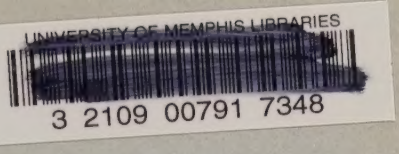

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A History of

FRENCH LITERATURE

BY

EDWARD DOWDEN

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PREFACE

FRENCH prose and French poetry had interested me during so many years that when Mr. Gosse invited me to write this book I knew that I was qualified in one particular—the love of my subject. Qualified in knowledge I was not, and could not be. No one can pretend to know the whole of a vast literature. He may have opened many books and turned many pages; he cannot have penetrated to the soul of all books from the *Song of Roland* to *Toute la Lyre*. Without reaching its spirit, to read a book is little more than to amuse the eye with printed type.

An adequate history of a great literature can be written only by collaboration. Professor Petit de Julleville, in the excellent *Histoire de la Langue et de la Littérature Française*, at present in process of publication, has his well-instructed specialist for each chapter. In this small volume I too, while constantly exercising my own judgment, have had my collaborators—the ablest and most learned students of French literature—who have written each a part of my book, while somehow it seems that I have written the whole. My collaborators are on my shelves. Without them I could not have accomplished my task; here I give them credit for their assistance. Some have written general histories

of French literature; some have written histories of periods—the Middle Ages, the sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth, nineteenth centuries; some have studied special literary fields or forms—the novel, the drama, tragedy, comedy, lyrical poetry, history, philosophy; many have written monographs on great authors; many have written short critical studies of books or groups of books. I have accepted from each a gift. But my assistants needed to be controlled; they brought me twenty thousand pages, and that was too much. Some were accurate in statement of fact, but lacked ideas; some had ideas, but disregarded accuracy of statement; some unjustly depreciated the seventeenth century, some the eighteenth. For my purposes their work had to be rewritten; and so it happens that this book is mine as well as theirs.

The sketch of mediæval literature follows the arrangement of matter in the two large volumes of M. Petit de Julleville and his fellow-labourers, to whom and to the writings of M. Gaston Paris I am on almost every page indebted. Many matters in dispute have here to be briefly stated in one way; there is no space for discussion. Provençal literature does not appear in this volume. It is omitted from the History of M. Petit de Julleville and from that of M. Lanson. In truth, except as an influence, it forms no part of literature in the French language.

The reader who desires guidance in bibliography will find it at the close of each chapter of the History edited by M. Petit de Julleville, less fully in the notes to

M. Lanson's History, and an excellent table of critical and biographical studies is appended to each volume of M. Lintilhac's *Histoire de la Littérature Française.* M. Lintilhac, however, omits many important English and German titles—among others, if I am not mistaken, those of Birsch-Hirschfeld's *Geschichte der Französichen Litteratur: die Zeit der Renaissance*, of Lotheissen's important *Geschichte der Französichen Litteratur im XVII. Jahrhundert*, and of Professor Flint's learned *Philosophy of History* (1893).

M. Lanson's work has been of great service in guiding me in the arrangement of my subjects, and in giving me courage to omit many names of the second or third rank which might be expected to appear in a history of French literature. In a volume like the present, selection is important, and I have erred more by inclusion than by exclusion. The limitation of space has made me desire to say no word that does not tend to bring out something essential or characteristic.

M. Lanson has ventured to trace French literature to the present moment. I have thought it wiser to close my survey with the decline of the romantic movement. With the rise of naturalism a new period opens. The literature of recent years is rather a subject for current criticism than for historical study.

I cannot say how often I have been indebted to the writings of M. Brunetière, M. Faguet, M. Larroumet, M. Paul Stapfer, and other living critics; to each of the volumes of *Les Grands Écrivains Français*, and to many of the volumes of the *Classiques Populaires.* M. Lintilhac's

edition of Merlet's *Études Littéraires* has also often served me. But to name my aids to study would be to fill some pages.

While not unmindful of historical and social influences, I desire especially to fix my reader's attention on great individuals, their ideas, their feelings, and their art. The general history of ideas should, in the first instance, be discerned by the student of literature through his observation of individual minds.

That errors must occur where so many statements are made, I am aware from past experience; but I have taken no slight pains to attain accuracy. It must not be hastily assumed that dates here recorded are incorrect because they sometimes differ from those given in other books. For my errors I must myself bear the responsibility; but by the editorial care of Mr. Gosse, in reading the proof-sheets of this book, the number of such errors has been reduced.

EDWARD DOWDEN.

DUBLIN, *June* 1897.

CONTENTS

BOOK THE FIRST — THE MIDDLE AGES

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	NARRATIVE RELIGIOUS POETRY — THE NATIONAL EPIC — THE EPIC OF ANTIQUITY—ROMANCES OF LOVE AND COURTESY .	3
II.	LYRICAL POETRY—FABLES, AND RENARD THE FOX—FABLIAUX —THE ROMANCE OF THE ROSE	24
III.	DIDACTIC LITERATURE—SERMONS—HISTORY	40
IV.	LATEST MEDIÆVAL POETS—THE DRAMA	58

BOOK THE SECOND — THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

I.	RENAISSANCE AND REFORMATION	81
II.	FROM THE PLÉIADE TO MONTAIGNE.	96

BOOK THE THIRD — THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

I.	LITERARY FREEDOM AND LITERARY ORDER	131
II.	THE FRENCH ACADEMY—PHILOSOPHY (DESCARTES)—RELIGION (PASCAL)	147
III.	THE DRAMA (MONTCHRESTIEN TO CORNEILLE) . . .	160
IV.	SOCIETY AND PUBLIC LIFE IN LETTERS	173
V.	BOILEAU AND LA FONTAINE	183
VI.	COMEDY AND TRAGEDY—MOLIÈRE—RACINE	196
VII.	BOSSUET AND THE PREACHERS—FÉNELON	219
VIII.	TRANSITION TO THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY	235

BOOK THE FOURTH — THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	MEMOIRS AND HISTORY—POETRY—THE THEATRE—THE NOVEL	251
II.	MONTESQUIEU—VAUVENARGUES—VOLTAIRE	273
III.	DIDEROT AND THE ENCYCLOPÆDIA—PHILOSOPHERS, ECONOMISTS, CRITICS—BUFFON	294
IV.	ROUSSEAU—BEAUMARCHAIS—BERNARDIN DE SAINT-PIERRE—ANDRÉ CHÉNIER	311

BOOK THE FIFTH — 1789–1850

I.	THE REVOLUTION AND THE EMPIRE—MADAME DE STAËL—CHATEAUBRIAND	335
II.	THE CONFLICT OF IDEAS	354
III.	POETRY OF THE ROMANTIC SCHOOL	363
IV.	THE NOVEL	396
V.	HISTORY—LITERARY CRITICISM	411
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	429
	INDEX	437

BOOK THE FIRST

THE MIDDLE AGES

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THE MIDDLE AGES

CHAPTER I

NARRATIVE RELIGIOUS POETRY—THE NATIONAL EPIC—THE EPIC OF ANTIQUITY—ROMANCES OF LOVE AND COURTESY

THE literature of the Middle Ages is an expression of the spirit of feudalism and of the genius of the Church. From the union of feudalism and Christianity arose the chivalric ideals, the new courtesy, the homage to woman. Abstract ideas, ethical, theological, and those of amorous metaphysics, were rendered through allegory into art. Against these high conceptions, and the overstrained sentiment connected with them, the positive intellect and the mocking temper of France reacted; a literature of satire arose. By degrees the bourgeois spirit encroached upon and overpowered the chivalric ideals. At length the mediæval conceptions were exhausted. Literature dwindled as its sources were impoverished; ingenuities and technical formalities replaced imagination. The minds of men were prepared to accept the new influences of the Renaissance and the Reformation.

I

Narrative Religious Poetry

The oldest monument of the French language is found in the Strasburg Oaths (842); the oldest French poem possessing literary merit is the *Vie de Saint Alexis*, of which a redaction belonging to the middle of the eleventh century survives. The passion of piety and the passion of combat, the religious and the warrior motives, found early expression in literature; from the first arose the Lives of Saints and other devout writings, from the second arose the *chansons de geste*. They grew side by side, and had a like manner of development. If one takes precedence of the other, it is only because by the chances of time *Saint Alexis* remains to us, and the forerunners of the *Chanson de Roland* are lost. With each species of poetry *cantilènes* — short lyrico-epic poems — preceded the narrative form. Both the profane and what may be called the religious *chanson de geste* were sung or recited by the same jongleurs—men of a class superior to the vulgar purveyors of amusement. Gradually the poems of both kinds expanded in length, and finally prose narrative took the place of verse.

The Lives of Saints are in the main founded on Latin originals; the names of their authors are commonly unknown. *Saint Alexis*, a tale of Syriac origin, possibly the work of Tedbalt, a canon of Vernon, consists of 125 stanzas, each of five lines which are bound together by a single assonant rhyme. It tells of the chastity and poverty of the saint, who flies from his virgin bride, lives among beggars, returns unrecognised to his father's

house, endures the insults of the servants, and, dying at Rome, receives high posthumous honours; finally, he is rejoined by his wife—the poet here adding to the legend—in the presence of God, among the company of the angels. Some of the sacred poems are derived from the Bible, rhymed versions of which were part of the jongleur's equipment; some from the apocryphal gospels, or legends of Judas, of Pilate, of the Cross, or, again, from the life of the Blessed Virgin. The literary value of these is inferior to that of the versified Lives of the Saints. About the tenth century the marvels of Eastern hagiography became known in France, and gave a powerful stimulus to the devout imagination. A certain rivalry existed between the claims of profane and religious literature, and a popular audience for narrative poems designed for edification was secured by their recital in churches. Wholly fabulous some of these are —as the legend of St. Margaret—but they were not on this account the less welcome or the less esteemed. In certain instances the tale is dramatically placed in the mouth of a narrator, and thus the way was in a measure prepared for the future mystery-plays.

More than fifty of these Lives of Saints are known, composed generally in octosyllabic verse, and varying in length from some hundreds of lines to ten thousand. In the group which treats of the national saints of France, an element of history obscured by errors, extravagances, and anachronisms may be found. The purely legendary matter occupies a larger space in those derived from the East, in which the religious ideal is that of the hermit life. The celebrated *Barlaam et Joasaph*, in which Joasaph, son of a king of India, escaping from his father's restraints, fulfils his allotted life as a Christian

ascetic, is traceable to a Buddhist source. The narratives of Celtic origin—such as those of the Purgatory of St. Patrick and the voyages of St. Brendan — are coloured by a tender mysticism, and sometimes charm us with a strangeness of adventure, in which a feeling for external nature, at least in its aspects of wonder, appears. The Celtic saints are not hermits of the desert, but travellers or pilgrims. Among the lives of contemporary saints, by far the most remarkable is that of our English Becket by Garnier de Pont-Sainte-Maxence. Garnier had himself known the archbishop; he obtained the testimony of witnesses in England; he visited the places associated with the events of Becket's life; his work has high value as an historical document; it possesses a personal accent, rare in such writings; a genuine dramatic vigour; and great skill and harmonious power in its stanzas of five rhyming lines.

A body of short poems, inspired by religious feeling, and often telling of miracles obtained by the intercession of the Virgin or the saints, is known as *Contes pieux*. Many of these were the work of Gautier de Coinci (1177–1236), a Benedictine monk; he translates from Latin sources, but with freedom, adding matter of his own, and in the course of his pious narratives gives an image, far from flattering, of the life and manners of his own time. It is he who tells of the robber who, being accustomed to commend himself in his adventures to our Lady, was supported on the gibbet for three days by her white hands, and received his pardon; and of the illiterate monk who suffered shame because he knew no more than his *Ave Maria*, but who, when dead, was proved a holy man by the five roses that came from his mouth in honour of the five letters of Maria's name;

and of the nun who quitted her convent to lead a life of disorder, yet still addressed a daily prayer to the Virgin, and who, returning after long years, found that the Blessed Mary had filled her place, and that her absence was unknown. The collection known as *Vies des Peres* exhibits the same naïveté of pious feeling and imagination. Man is weak and sinful; but by supernatural aid the humble are exalted, sinners are redeemed, and the suffering innocent are avenged. Even Theophile, the priest who sold his soul to the devil, on repentance redeems back from the Queen of Heaven the very document by which he had put his salvation in pawn. The sinner (*Pécheur en bataille*) who endeavours for a year to fill the hermit's little cask at running streams, and endeavours in vain, finds it brimming the moment one tear of true penitence falls into the vessel. Most exquisite in its feeling is the tale of the *Tumbeur de Notre-Dame*—a poor acrobat—a jongleur turned monk—who knows not even the *Pater noster* or the *Credo*, and can only offer before our Lady's altar his tumbler's feats; he is observed, and as he sinks worn-out and faint before the shrine, the Virgin is seen to descend, with her angelic attendants, and to wipe away the sweat from her poor servant's forehead. If there be no other piety in such a tale as this, there is at least the piety of human pity.

II

The National Epic

Great events and persons, a religious and national spirit, and a genius for heroic narrative being given, epic literature arises, as it were, inevitably. Short poems,

partly narrative, partly lyrical, celebrate victories or defeats, the achievements of conquerors or defenders, and are sung to relieve or to sustain the passion of the time. The French epopee had its origin in the national songs of the Germanic invaders of Gaul, adopted from their conquerors by the Gallo-Romans. With the baptism of Clovis at Reims, and the acceptance of Christianity by the Franks (496), a national consciousness began to exist—a national and religious ideal arose. Epic heroes—Clovis, Clotaire, Dagobert, Charles Martel —became centres for the popular imagination; an echo of the Dagobert songs is found in *Floovent*, a poem of the twelfth century; eight Latin lines, given in the *Vie de Saint Faron* by Helgaire, Bishop of Meaux, preserve, in their ninth-century rendering, a fragment of the songs which celebrated Clotaire II. Doubtless more and more in these lost *cantilènes* the German element yielded to the French, and finally the two streams of literature—French and German—separated; gradually, also, the lyrical element yielded to the epic, and the *chanson de geste* was developed from these songs.

In Charlemagne, champion of Christendom against Islam, a great epic figure appeared; on his person converged the epic interest; he may be said to have absorbed into himself, for the imagination of the singers and the people, the persons of his predecessors, and even, at a later time, of his successors; their deeds became his deeds, their fame was merged in his; he stood forth as the representative of France. We may perhaps regard the ninth century as the period of the transformation of the *cantilènes* into the *chansons de geste;* in the fragment of Latin prose of the tenth

century — reduced to prose from hexameters, but not completely reduced — discovered at La Haye (and named after the place of its discovery), is found an epic episode of Carlovingian war, probably derived from a *chanson de geste* of the preceding century. In each *chanson* the *gesta*,[1] the deeds or achievements of a heroic person, are glorified, and large as may be the element of invention in these poems, a certain historical basis or historical germ may be found, with few exceptions, in each. Roland was an actual person, and a battle was fought at Roncevaux in 778. William of Orange actually encountered the Saracens at Villedaigne in 793. Renaud de Montauban lived and fought, not indeed against Charlemagne, but against Charles Martel. Ogier, Girard de Roussillon, Raoul de Cambrai, were not mere creatures of the fancy. Even when the narrative records no historical series of events, it may express their general significance, and condense into itself something of the spirit of an epoch. In the course of time, however, fantasy made a conquest of the historical domain; a way for the triumph of fantasy had been opened by the incorporation of legend into the narrative, with all its wild exaggerations, its reckless departures from truth, its conventional types of character, its endlessly-repeated incidents of romance — the child nourished by wild beasts, the combat of unrecognised father and son, the hero vulnerable only in one point, the vindication of the calumniated wife or maiden; and by the overlabour of fantasy, removed far from nature and reality, the epic material was at length exhausted.

The oldest surviving *chanson de geste* is the SONG OF ROLAND, and it is also the best. The disaster of

[1] *Gestes* meant (1) deeds, (2) their history, (3) the heroic family.

Roncevaux, probably first sung in *cantilènes*, gave rise to other chansons, two of which, of earlier date than the surviving poem, can in a measure be reconstructed from the Chronicle of Turpin and from a Latin *Carmen de proditione Guenonis*. These, however, do not detract from the originality of the noble work in our possession, some of the most striking episodes of which are not elsewhere found. The oldest manuscript is at Oxford, and the last line has been supposed to give the author's name —Touroude (Latinised "Turoldus")—but this may have been the name of the jongleur who sang, or the transcriber who copied. The date of the poem lies between that of the battle of Hastings, 1066, where the minstrel Taillefer sang in other words the deeds of Roland, and the year 1099. The poet was probably a Norman, and he may have been one of the Norman William's followers in the invasion of England.

More than any other poem, the *Chanson de Roland* deserves to be named the Iliad of the Middle Ages. On August 15, 778, the rearguard of Charlemagne's army, returning from a successful expedition to the north of Spain, was surprised and destroyed by Basque mountaineers in the valley of Roncevaux. Among those who fell was Hrodland (Roland), Count of the march of Brittany. For Basques, the singers substituted a host of Saracens, who, after promise of peace, treacherously attack the Franks, with the complicity of Roland's enemy, the traitor Ganelon. By Roland's side is placed his companion-in-arms, Olivier, brave but prudent, brother of Roland's betrothed, *la belle Aude*, who learns her lover's death, and drops dead at the feet of Charlemagne. In fact but thirty-six years of age, Charlemagne is here a majestic old man, *à la barbe fleurie*, still full of heroic

igour. Around him are his great lords—Duke Naime, ne Nestor of this Iliad; Archbishop Turpin, the warrior relate; Oger the Dane; the traitor Ganelon. And verhead is God, who will send his angels to bear eavenwards the soul of the gallant Roland. The idea f the poem is at once national and religious — the truggle between France, as champion of Christendom, hd the enemies of France and of God. Its spirit is that f the feudal aristocracy of the eleventh century. The haracters are in some degree representative of general ypes, but that of Roland is clearly individualised; the xcess of soldierly pride which will not permit him, until o late, to sound his horn and recall Charlemagne to is aid, is a glorious fault. When all his comrades have llen, he still continues the strife; and when he dies, it with his face to the retreating foe. His fall is not navenged on the Saracens and on the traitor. The oem is written in decasyllabic verse—in all 4000 lines —divided into sections or *laisses* of varying length, the nes of each *laisse* being held together by a single ssonance.[1] And such is the form in which the best *hansons de geste* are written. The decasyllabic line, erived originally from popular Latin verse, rhythmical ather than metrical, such as the Roman legionaries ang, is the favourite verse of the older chansons. The lexandrine,[2] first seen in the *Pèlerinage de Jérusalem* of ne early years of the twelfth century, in general in- icates later and inferior work. The *laisse*, bound in ne by its identical assonance, might contain five lines

[1] *Assonance, i.e.* vowel-rhyme, without an agreement of consonants.

[2] Verse of twelve syllables, with cesura after the sixth accented syllable. n the decasyllabic line the cesura generally followed the fourth, but some- mes the sixth, tonic syllable.

or five hundred. In chansons of late date the full rhyme often replaces assonance; but inducing, as it did in unskilled hands, artificial and feeble expansions of the sense, rhyme was a cause which co-operated with other causes in the decline of this form of narrative poetry.

Naturally the chansons which celebrated the achievements of one epic personage or one heroic family fell into a group, and the idea of cycles of songs having arisen, the later poets forced many independent subjects to enter into the so-called cycle of the king (Charlemagne), or that of William of Orange, or that of Doon of Mayence. The second of these had, indeed, a genuine cyclic character: it told of the resistance of the south of France to the Mussulmans. The last cycle to develop was that of the Crusades. Certain poems or groups of poems may be distinguished as *gestes* of the provinces, including the *Geste des Lorrains*, that of the North (*Raoul de Cambrai*), that of Burgundy, and others.[1] Among these may be placed the beautiful tale of *Amis et Amiles*, a glorification of friendship between man and man, which endures all trials and self-sacrifices. Other poems, again, are unconnected with any of these cycles; and, indeed, the cyclic division is more a convenience of classification than a fact in the spontaneous development of this form of art. The entire period of the evolution of epic song extends from the tenth or eleventh to the fifteenth century, or, we might say, from the *Chanson de Roland* to the *Chronique de Bertrand Duguesclin*. The eleventh century produced the most admirable work;

[1] The epopee composed in Provençal, sung but not transcribed, is wholly lost. The development of lyric poetry in the South probably checked the development of the epic.

In the twelfth century the chansons are more numerous, but nothing was written of equal merit with the Song of Roland; after the death of Louis VII. (1180) the old epic material was rehandled and beaten thin—the decadence was already in progress.

The style in which the *chansons de geste* are written is something traditional, something common to the people and to the time, rather than characteristic of the individual authors. They show little of the art of arranging or composing the matter so as to produce an unity of effect: the narrative straggles or condenses itself as if by accident; skill in transitions is unknown. The study of character is rude and elementary: a man is either heroic or dastard, loyal or a traitor; wholly noble, or absolutely base. Yet certain types of manhood and womanhood are presented with power and beauty. The feeling for external nature, save in some traditional formulæ, hardly appears. The passion for the marvellous is everywhere present: St. Maurice, St. George, and a shining company, mounted on white steeds, will of a sudden bear down the hordes of the infidel; an angel stands glorious behind the throne of Charlemagne; or in narrative of Celtic origin angels may be mingled with fays. God, the great suzerain, to whom even kings owe homage, rules over all; Jesus and Mary are watchful of the soldiers of the cross; Paradise receives the souls of the faithful. As for earth, there is no land so gay or so dear as *la douce France*. The Emperor is above all the servant and protector of the Church. As the influence of the great feudal lords increased, they are magnified often at the expense of the monarchy; yet even when in high rebellion, they secretly feel the duty of loyalty. The recurring poetic epithet

and phrase of formula found in the *chansons de geste* often indicate rather than veil a defect of imagination. Episodes and adventures are endlessly repeated from poem to poem with varying circumstances—the siege, the assault, the capture, the duel of Christian hero and Saracen giant, the Paynim princess amorous of a fair French prisoner, the marriage, the massacre, and a score of other favourite incidents.

The popularity of the French epopee extended beyond France. Every country of Europe translated or imitated the *chansons de geste*. Germany made the fortunate choice of *Roland* and *Aliscans*. In England two of the worst examples, *Fierabras* and *Otinel*, were special favourites. In Norway the chansons were applied to the purpose of religious propaganda. Italy made the tales of Roland, Ogier, Renaud, her own. Meanwhile the national epopee declined in France; a breath of scepticism touched and withered the leafage and blossom of imagination; it even became possible to parody — as in *Audigier* — the heroic manner. The employment of rhyme in place of assonance, and of the alexandrine in place of the decasyllabic line, encouraged what may be called poetical padding. The influence of the Breton romances diverted the *chansons de geste* into ways of fantasy; "We shall never know," writes M. Léon Gautier, "the harm which the Round Table has done us." Finally, verse became a weariness, and was replaced by prose. The decline had progressed to a fall.

III

The Epic of Antiquity

Later to develop than the national epopee was that hich formed the cycle of antiquity. Their romantic latter made the works of the Greco-Roman decadence ven more attractive than the writings of the great assical authors to poets who would enter into rivalry ith the singers of the *chansons de geste*. These oems, which mediævalise ancient literature — poems ften of portentous length — have been classified in ree groups — epic romances, historical or pseudo-storical romances, and mythological tales, including e imitations of Ovid. The earliest in date of the rst group (about 1150–1155) is the Romance of Thebes, the work of an unknown author, founded pon a compendium of the Thebaid of Statius, pre-ded by the story of Œdipus. It opened the way r the vast Romance of Troy, written some ten ars later, by Benoit de Sainte-More. The chief urces of Benoit were versions, probably more or ss augmented, of the famous records of the Trojan ar, ascribed to the Phrygian Dares, an imaginary fender of the city, and the Cretan Dictys, one of e besiegers. Episodes were added, in which, on slender suggestion, Benoit set his own inventive culty to work, and among these by far the most teresting and admirable is the story of Troilus and riseida, known better to us by her later name of ressida. Through Boccaccio's *Il Filostrato* this tale ached our English Chaucer, and through Chaucer it

gave rise to the strange, half-heroic, half-satirical play of Shakespeare.

Again, ten years later, an unknown poet was adapting Virgil to the taste of his contemporaries in his *Eneas*, where the courtship of the Trojan hero and Lavinia is related in the chivalric manner. All these poems are composed in the swift octosyllabic verse; the *Troy* extends to thirty thousand lines. While the names of the personages are classical, the spirit and life of the romances are wholly mediæval: Troilus, and Hector, and Æneas are conceived as if knights of the Middle Ages; their wars and loves are those of gallant chevaliers. The *Romance of Julius Cæsar* (in alexandrine verse), the work of a certain Jacot de Forest, writing in the second half of the thirteenth century, versifies, with some additions from the Commentaries of Cæsar, an earlier prose translation by Jehan de Thuin (about 1240) of Lucan's Pharsalia—the oldest translation in prose of any secular work of antiquity. Cæsar's passion for Cleopatra in the Romance is the love prescribed to good knights by the amorous code of the writer's day, and Cleopatra herself has borrowed something of the charm of Tristram's Iseult.

If *Julius Cæsar* may be styled historical, the ROMAN D'ALEXANDRE, a poem of twenty thousand lines (to the form of which this romance gave its name—"alexandrine" verse), the work of Lambert le Tort and Alexandre de Bernay, can only be described as legendary. All—or nearly all—that was written during the Middle Ages in French on the subject of Alexander may be traced back to Latin versions of a Greek compilation, perhaps of the first century, ascribed to Callisthenes, the companion of Alexander on his Asiatic

xpedition.[1] It is uncertain how much the *Alexandre* may owe to a Provençal poem on the same subject, written in the early years of the twelfth century, probably by Albéric de Briançon, of which only a short fragment, but that of high merit, has been preserved. From his birth, and his education by Aristotle and the enchanter Nectanebus, to the division, as death approaches, of his empire between his twelve peers, the story of Alexander is a series of marvellous adventures; the imaginary wonders of the East, monstrous wild beasts, water-women, flower-maidens, Amazons, rain of fire, magic mountains, magic fountains, trees of the sun and of the moon, are introduced with a liberal hand. The hero is specially distinguished by the virtue of liberality; a jongleur who charms him by lays sung to the flute, is rewarded with the lordship of Tarsus, a worthy example for the twelfth-century patrons of the poet. The romance had a resounding fame.

Of classical poets, Ovid ranked next to Virgil in the esteem of the Middle Ages. The mythology of paganism was sanctified by the assumption that it was an allegory of Christian mysteries, and thus the stories might first be enjoyed by the imagination, and then be expounded in their spiritual meaning. The *Metamorphoses* supplied Chrétien de Troyes with the subject of his *Philomena;* other writers gracefully dealt with the tales of *Piramus* and of *Narcissus*. But the most important work founded upon Ovid was a versified translation of the *Metamorphoses* (before 1305) by a Franciscan monk, Chrétien Legouais de Sainte-Maure, with appended interpreta-

[1] Not quite all, for certain borrowings were made from the correspondence of Alexander with Dindimus, King of the Brahmans, and from the *Alexandri magni iter ad Paradisum.*

tions, scientific, historical, moral, or religious, of the mythological fables. Ovid's *Art of Love*, of which more than one rendering was made, aided in the formation or development of the mediæval theory of love and the amorous casuistry founded upon that theory.

IV

Romances of Love and Courtesy

Under the general title of the *Épopée courtoise*—the Epopee of Courtesy—may be grouped those romances which are either works of pure imagination or of uncertain origin, or which lead us back to Byzantine or to Celtic sources. They include some of the most beautiful and original poems of the Middle Ages. Appearing first about the opening of the twelfth century, later in date than the early *chansons de geste*, and contemporary with the courtly lyric poetry of love, they exhibit the chivalric spirit in a refined and graceful aspect; their marvels are not gross wonders, but often surprises of beauty; they are bright in colour, and varied in the play of life; the passions which they interpret, and especially the passion of love, are felt with an exquisite delicacy and a knowledge of the workings of the heart. They move lightly in their rhymed or assonanced verse; even when they passed into the form of prose they retained something of their charm. Breton harpers wandering through France and England made Celtic themes known through their *lais;* the fame of King Arthur was spread abroad by these singers and by the *History* of Geoffrey of Monmouth. French poets welcomed the new matter of romance, infused into it their own chivalric

spirit, made it a receptacle for their ideals of gallantry, courtesy, honour, grace, and added their own beautiful inventions. With the story of King Arthur was connected that of the sacred vessel—the graal—in which Joseph of Arimathea at the cross had received the Saviour's blood. And thus the rude Breton *lais* were elevated not only to a chivalric but to a religious purpose.

The romances of Tristan may certainly be named as of Celtic origin. About 1150 an Anglo-Norman poet, BÉROUL, brought together the scattered narrative of his adventures in a romance, of which a large fragment remains. The secret loves of Tristan and Iseut, their woodland wanderings, their dangers and escapes, are related with fine imaginative sympathy; but in this version of the tale the fatal love-philtre operates only for a period of three years; Iseut, with Tristan's consent, returns to her husband, King Marc; and then a second passion is born in their hearts, a passion which is the offspring not of magic but of natural attraction, and at a critical moment of peril the fragment closes. About twenty years later (1170) the tale was again sung by an Anglo-Norman named THOMAS. Here—again in a fragment—we read of Tristan's marriage, a marriage only in name, to the white-handed Iseut of Brittany, his fidelity of heart to his one first love, his mortal wound and deep desire to see the Queen of Cornwall, the device of the white or black sails to announce the result of his entreaty that she should come, his deception, and the death of his true love upon her lover's corpse. Early in the thirteenth century was composed a long prose romance, often rehandled and expanded, upon the same subject, in which Iseut and Tristan meet at the last moment and die in a close embrace.

Le Chèvrefeuille (The Honeysuckle), one of several *lais* by a twelfth-century poetess, MARIE, living in England, but a native of France, tells gracefully of an assignation of Tristan and Iseut, their meeting in the forest, and their sorrowful farewell. Marie de France wrote with an exquisite sense of the generosities and delicacy of the heart, and with a skill in narrative construction which was rare among the poets of her time. In *Les Deux Amants*, the manly pride of passion, which in a trial of strength declines the adventitious aid of a reviving potion, is rewarded by the union in death of the lover and his beloved. In *Yonec* and in *Lanval* tales of love and chivalry are made beautiful by lore of fairyland, in which the element of wonder is subdued to beauty. But the most admirable poem by Marie de France is unquestionably her *Eliduc*. The Breton knight Eliduc is passionately loved by Guilliadon, the only daughter of the old King of Exeter, on whose behalf he had waged battle. Her tokens of affection, girdle and ring, are received by Eliduc in silence; for, though her passion is returned, he has left in Brittany, unknown to Guilliadon, a faithful wife. Very beautiful is the self-transcending love of the wife, who restores her rival from seeming death, and herself retires into a convent. The lovers are wedded, and live in charity to the poor, but with a trouble at the heart for the wrong that they have done. In the end they part; Eliduc embraces the religious life, and the two loving women are united as sisters in the same abbey.

Wace, in his romance of the *Brut* (1155), which renders into verse the *Historia* of Geoffrey of Monmouth, makes the earliest mention of the Round Table. Whether the Arthurian legends be of Celtic or of French origin—and the former seems probable—the French romances of

King Arthur owe but the crude material to Celtic sources; they may be said to begin with CHRÉTIEN DE TROYES, whose lost poem on Tristan was composed about 1160. Between that date and 1175 he wrote his *Erec et Enide* (a tale known to us through Tennyson's idyll of Geraint and Enid, derived from the Welsh *Mabinogion*), *Cligès*, *Le Chevalier de la Charrette*, *Le Chevalier au Lion*, and *Perceval*. In *Cligès* the maidenhood of his beloved Fénice, wedded in form to the Emperor of Constantinople, is guarded by a magic potion; like Romeo's Juliet, she sleeps in apparent death, but, happier than Juliet, she recovers from her trance to fly with her lover to the court of Arthur. The *Chevalier de la Charrette*, at first unknown by name, is discovered to be Lancelot, who, losing his horse, has condescended, in order that he may obtain sight of Queen Guenièvre, and in passionate disregard of the conventions of knighthood, to seat himself in a cart which a dwarf is leading. After gallant adventures on the Queen's behalf, her indignant resentment of his unknightly conduct, estrangement, and rumours of death, he is at length restored to her favour.[1] While *Perceval* was still unfinished, Chrétien de Troyes died. It was continued by other poets, and through this romance the quest of the holy graal became a portion of the Arthurian cycle. A *Perceval* by ROBERT DE BORON, who wrote in the early part of the thirteenth century, has been lost; but a prose redaction of the romance exists, which closes with the death of King Arthur. The great *Lancelot* in prose — a vast compilation — (about 1220) reduces the various adventures of its hero and of other knights of the King to their definitive form; and

[1] Chrétien de Troyes is the first poet to tell of the love of Lancelot for the Queen.

here the achievement of the graal is assigned, not to Perceval, but to the saintly knight Sir Galaad ; Arthur is slain in combat with the revolter Mordret ; and Lancelot and the Queen enter into the life of religion. Passion and piety are alike celebrated ; the rude Celtic legends have been sanctified. The earlier history of the sacred vase was traced by Robert de Boron in his *Joseph d'Arimathie* (or the *Saint-Graal*), soon to be rehandled and developed in prose ; and he it was who, in his *Merlin*—also presently converted into prose—on suggestions derived from Geoffrey of Monmouth, brought the great enchanter into Arthurian romance. By the middle of the thirteenth century the cycle had received its full development. Towards the middle of the fourteenth century, in *Perceforest*, an attempt was made to connect the legend of Alexander the Great with that of King Arthur.

Beside the so-called Breton romances, the *Épopée courtoise* may be taken to include many poems of Greek, of Byzantine, or of uncertain origin, such as the *Roman de la Violette*, the tale of a wronged wife, having much in common with that novel of Boccaccio with which Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* is connected, the *Floire et Blanchefleur;* the *Parténopeus de Blois*, a kind of "Cupid and Psyche" story, with the parts of the lovers transposed, and others. In the early years of the thirteenth century the prose romance rivalled in popularity the romance in verse. The exquisite *chante-fable* of *Aucassin et Nicolette*, of the twelfth century, is partly in prose, partly in assonanced *laisses* of seven-syllable verse. It is a story of the victory of love : the heir of Count Garin of Beaucaire is enamoured of a beautiful maiden of unknown birth, purchased from the Saracens, who proves

to be daughter of the King of Carthage, and in the end the lovers are united. In one remarkable passage unusual sympathy is shown with the hard lot of the peasant, whose trials and sufferings are contrasted with the lighter troubles of the aristocratic class.

In general the poems of the *Épopée courtoise* exhibit much of the brilliant external aspect of the life of chivalry as idealised by the imagination; dramatic situations are ingeniously devised; the emotions of the chief actors are expounded and analysed, sometimes with real delicacy; but in the conception of character, in the recurring incidents, in the types of passion, in the creation of marvel and surprise, a large conventional element is present. Love is independent of marriage, or rather the relation of wedlock excludes love in the accepted sense of the word; the passion is almost necessarily illegitimate, and it comes as if it were an irresistible fate; the first advance is often made by the woman; but, though at war with the duty of wedlock, love is conceived as an ennobling influence, prompting the knight to all deeds of courage and self-sacrifice. Through the later translation of the Spanish *Amadis des Gaules*, something of the spirit of the mediæval romances was carried into the chivalric and pastoral romances of the seventeenth century.

CHAPTER II

LYRICAL POETRY—FABLES, AND RENARD THE FOX—FABLIAUX—THE ROMANCE OF THE ROSE

I

Lyrical Poetry

Long before the date of any lyrical poems that have come down to us, song and dance were a part of the life of the people of the North as well as of the South of France; religious festivals were celebrated with a gaiety which had its mundane side; love and malicious sport demanded an expression as well as pious joy. But in tracing the forms of lyrical verse anterior to the middle of the twelfth century, when the troubadour influence from the South began to be felt, we must be guided partly by conjecture, derived from the later poetry, in which—and especially in the refrains—earlier fragments have been preserved.

The common characteristic which distinguishes the earlier lyrics is the presence in them of an objective element: they do not merely render an emotion; they contain something of a story, or they suggest a situation. In this literature of sentiment, the singer or imagined singer is commonly a woman. The *chanson d'histoire* is also known as *chanson de toile*, for the songs were such

as suited "the spinsters and the knitters in the sun." Their inspiring motive was a girl's joy or grief in love; they lightly outline or suggest the facts of a miniature drama of passion, and are aided by the repeated lyrical cry of a refrain. As yet, love was an affair for the woman; it was she alone who made a confession of the heart. None of these poems are later than the close of the twelfth century. If the author be represented as actor or witness, the poem is rather a *chanson à personnages* than a *chanson d'histoire;* most frequently it is a wife who is supposed to utter to husband, or lover, or to the poet, her complaint of the grievous servitude of marriage. The *aube* is, again, a woman's song, uttered as a parting cry when the lark at daybreak, or the watcher from his tower, warns her lover to depart. In the *pastourelle*—a form much cultivated—a knight and a shepherdess meet; love proposals are made, and find a response favourable or the reverse; witnesses or companions may be present, and take a part in the action. The *rondet* is a dancing-song, in which the refrain corresponds with one of the movements of the dance; a solo-singer is answered by the response of a chorus; in the progress of time the *rondet* assumed the precise form of the modern triolet; the theme was still love, at first treated seriously if not tragically, but at a later time in a spirit of gaiety. It is conjectured that all these lyrical forms had their origin in the festivities of May, when the return of spring was celebrated by dances in which women alone took part, a survival from the pagan rites of Venus.

The *poésie courtoise*, moulded in form and inspired in its sentiment by the Provençal lyrics, lies within the compass of about one hundred and thirty years, from

1150 to 1280. The Crusade of 1147 served, doubtless, as a point of meeting for men of the North and of the South; but, apart from this, we may bear in mind the fact that the mediæval poet wandered at will from country to country and from court to court. In 1137, Louis VII. married Éléonore of Aquitaine, who was an ardent admirer of the poetry of courtesy. Her daughters inherited her taste, and themselves became patronesses of literature at the courts of their husbands, Henri de Champagne and Thibaut de Blois. From these courts, and that of Paris, this poetry of culture spread, and the earlier singers were persons of royal or noble rank and birth. The chief period of its cultivation was probably from 1200 to 1240. During the half-century before its sudden cessation, while continuing to be a fashion in courts and high society, it reached the wealthy bourgeoisie of the North. At Arras, where Jacques Bretel and Adam de la Halle, the hunchback, were eminent in song, it had its latest moments of splendour.

It is essentially a poetry of the intellect and of the imagination, dealing with an elaborated theory of love; the simple and spontaneous cry of passion is rarely heard. According to the amorous doctrine, love exists only between a married woman and the aspirant to her heart, and the art of love is regulated by a stringent code. Nothing can be claimed by the lover as a right; the grace of his lady, who is placed far above him, must be sought as a favour; for that favour he must qualify himself by all knightly virtues, and chief among these, as the position requires, are the virtues of discretion and patience. Hence the poet's ingenuities of adoration; hence often the monotony of artificial passion; hence, also, subtleties and curiosities of expression, and sought-

out delicacies of style. In the earlier chansons some outbreak of instinctive feeling may be occasionally present; but, as the amorous metaphysics developed, what came to be admired was the skill shown in manipulating a conventional sentiment; the lady became an abstraction of exalted beauty, the lover an interpreter of the theory of love; the most personal of passions lost the character of individuality. Occasionally, as in the poems of the Châtelain de Couci, of Conon de Béthune, of Thibaut de Champagne, and of Adam de la Halle, something personal to the writer may be discerned; but in general the poetry is that of a doctrine and of a school.

In some instances the reputation of the lyrical trouvère was founded rather on his music than his verse. The metrical forms were various, and were gradually reduced to rule; the *ballette*, of Provençal origin, was a more elaborate *rondet*, consisting of stanzas and refrain; the *estampie* (*stampôn*, to beat the ground with the foot) was a dancing-song; the lyric *lai*, virtually identical with the *descort*, consisted of stanzas which varied in structure; the *motet*, a name originally applied to pieces of church music, was freer in versification, and occasionally dealt with popular themes. Among forms which cannot be included under the general title of chansons, are those in dialogue derived from the Provençal literature; in the *tenson* or *débat* the two interlocutors put forth their opinions on what theme they may please; in the *jeu parti* one of the imagined disputants proposes two contrary solutions of some poetical or amorous question, and defends whichever solution his associate refuses to accept; the earliest *jeu parti*, attributed to Gace Brulé and Count Geoffroi of

Brittany, belongs to the second half of the twelfth century. The *serventois* were historical poems, and among them songs of the crusades, or moral, or religious, or satirical pieces, directed against woman and the worship of woman. To these various species we should add the songs in honour of the saints, the sorrows of the Virgin uttered at the foot of the cross, and other devout lyrics which lie outside the *poésie courtoise.* With the close of the thirteenth century this fashion of artificial love-lyric ceased: a change passed over the modes of thought and feeling in aristocratic society, and other forms took the place of those found in the *poésie courtoise.*

II

Fables and Renard the Fox

The desire of ecclesiastical writers in the Middle Ages to give prominence to that part of classical literature which seemed best suited to the purpose of edification caused the fables of Phædrus and Avianus to be regarded with special honour. Various renderings from the thirteenth century onwards were made under the title of *Isopets*,[1] a name appropriated to collections of fables whether derived from Æsop or from other sources. The twelfth-century fables in verse of Marie de France, founded on an English collection, include apologues derived not only from classical authors but from the tales of popular tradition. A great collection made about 1450 by Steinhœwel, a physician of Ulm, was

[1] The earlier "Romulus" was the name of the supposed author of the fables of Phædrus, while that of Phædrus was still unknown.

translated into French, and became the chief source of later collections, thus appearing in the remote ancestry of the work of La Fontaine. The æsthetic value of the mediæval fables, including those of Marie de France, is small; the didactic intention was strong, the literary art was feeble.

It is far otherwise with the famous beast-epic, the ROMAN DE RENARD. The cycle consists of many parts or "branches" connected by a common theme; originating and obscurely developed in the North, in Picardy, in Normandy, and the Isle of France, it suddenly appeared in literature in the middle of the twelfth century, and continued to receive additions and variations during nearly two hundred years. The spirit of the *Renard* poems is essentially bourgeois; the heroes of the *chansons de geste* achieve their wondrous deeds by strength and valour; Renard the fox is powerful by skill and cunning; the greater beasts—his chief enemy the wolf, and others—are no match for his ingenuity and endless resources; but he is powerless against smaller creatures, the cock, the crow, the sparrow. The names of the personages are either significant names, such as Noble, the lion, and Chanticleer, the cock, or proper names, such as Isengrin, the wolf, Bruno, the bear, Tibert, the cat, Bernard, the ass; and as certain of these proper names are found in the eastern district, it has been conjectured that a poet of Lotharingia in the tenth century first told in Latin the wars of fox and wolf, and that through translations the epic matter, derived originally from popular tradition, reached the trouvères of the North. While in a certain degree typical figures, the beasts are at the same time individual; Renard is not the representative merely of a species; he

is Renard, an individual, with a personality of his own; Isengrin is not merely a wolf, he is the particular wolf Isengrin; each is an epic individual, heroic and undying. Classical fable remotely exerted an influence on certain branches of the Romance; but the vital substance of the epic is derived from the stores of popular tradition in which material from all quarters —the North of Europe and the Eastern world—had been gradually fused. In the artistic treatment of such material the chief difficulty lies in preserving a just measure between the beast-character and the imported element of humanity. Little by little the anthropomorphic features were developed at the expense of verisimilitude; the beast forms became a mere masquerade; the romances were converted into a satire, and the satire lost rather than gained by the inefficient disguise.

The earliest branches of the cycle have reached us only in a fragmentary way, but they can be in part reconstructed from the Latin *Isengrinus* of Nivard of Ghent (about 1150), and from the German *Reinhart Fuchs*, a rendering from the French by an Alsatian, Henri le Glichezare (about 1180). The wars of Renard and Isengrin are here sung, and the failure of Renard's trickeries against the lesser creatures; the spirit of these early branches is one of frank gaiety, untroubled by a didactic or satirical intention. In the branches of the second period the parody of human society is apparent; some of the episodes are fatiguing in their details; some are intolerably gross, but the poem known as the Branch of the Judgment is masterly—an ironical comedy, in which, without sacrifice of the primitive character of the beast-epic, the spirit of mediæval life is transported into the animal world. Isengrin, the accuser of Renard before

King Noble and his court, is for a moment worsted; the fox is vindicated, when suddenly enters a funeral cortège—Chanticleer and his four wives bear upon a litter the dead body of one of their family, the victim of Renard's wiles. The prayers for the dead are recited, the burial is celebrated with due honour, and Renard is summoned to justice; lie heaped upon lie will not save him; at last he humbles himself with pious repentance, and promising to seek God's pardon over-sea, is permitted in his pilgrim's habit to quit the court. It is this Judgment of Renard which formed the basis of the *Reineke Fuchs*, known to us through the modernisation of Goethe.

From the date of the Branch of the Judgment the Renard Romances declined. The Judgment was imitated by inferior hands, and the beasts were more and more nearly transformed to men; the spirit of gaiety was replaced by seriousness or gloom; Renard ceased to be a light-footed and ingenious rogue; he became a type of human fraud and cruelty; whatever in society was false and base and merciless became a form of "renardie," and by "renardie" the whole world seemed to be ruled. Such is the temper expressed in *Le Couronnement Renard*, written in Flanders soon after 1250, a satire directed chiefly against the mendicant orders, in which the fox, turned friar for a season, ascends the throne. *Renard le Nouveau*, the work of a poet of Lille, Jacquemart Gelée, nearly half a century later, represents again the triumph of the spirit of evil; although far inferior in execution to the *Judgment*, it had remarkable success, to which the allegory, wearying to a modern reader, no doubt contributed at a time when allegory was a delight. The last of the Renard romances, *Renard le Contrefait*, was composed at Troyes before 1328, by an ecclesiastic who had

renounced his profession and turned to trade. In his leisure hours he spun, in discipleship to Jean de Meun, his interminable poem, which is less a romance than an encyclopædia of all the knowledge and all the opinions of the author. This latest *Renard* has a value akin to that of the second part of *Le Roman de la Rose;* it is a presentation of the ideas and manners of the time by one who freely criticised and mocked the powers that be, both secular and sacred, and who was in sympathy with a certain movement or tendency towards social, political, and intellectual reform.

III

Fabliaux

The name *fabliaux* is applied to short versified tales, comic in character, and intended rather for recitation than for song. Out of a far larger number about one hundred and fifty have survived. The earliest—*Richeut*—is of the year 1159. From the middle of the twelfth century, together with the heroic or sentimental poetry of feudalism, we find this bourgeois poetry of realistic observation; and even in the *chansons de geste*, in occasional comic episodes, something may be seen which is in close kinship with the fabliaux. Many brief humorous stories, having much in common under their various disguises, exist as part of the tradition of many lands and peoples. The theory which traces the French fabliaux to Indian originals is unproved, and indeed is unnecessary. The East, doubtless, contributed its quota to the common stock, but so did other quarters of the globe; such tales are ubiquitous and are undying, only the

particular form which they assume being determined by local conditions.

The fabliaux, as we can study them, belong especially to the north and north-east of France, and they continued to be put forth by their rhymers until about 1340, the close of the twelfth and the beginning of the thirteenth century being the period of their greatest popularity. Simple and obvious jests sufficed to raise a laugh among folk disposed to good humour; by degrees something of art and skill was attained. The misfortunes of husbands supplied an inexhaustible store of merriment; if woman and the love of woman were idealised in the romances, the fabliaux took their revenge, and exhibited her as the pretty traitress of a shameless comedy. If religion was honoured in the age of faith, the bourgeois spirit found matter of mirth in the adventures of dissolute priests and self-indulgent monks. Not a few of the fabliaux are cynically gross—ribald but not voluptuous. To literary distinction they made small pretence. It sufficed if the tale ran easily in the current speech, thrown into rhyming octosyllables; but brevity, frankness, natural movement are no slight or common merits in mediæval poetry, and something of the social life of the time is mirrored in these humorous narratives.

To regard them as a satire of class against class, inspired by indignation, is to misconceive their true character; they are rather miniature comedies or caricatures, in which every class in turn provides material for mirth. It may, however, be said that with the writers of the fabliaux to hold woman in scorn is almost an article of faith. Among these writers a few persons of secular rank or dignified churchmen occasionally appeared; but

what we may call the professional rhymers and reciters were the humbler jongleurs addressing a bourgeois audience — degraded clerics, unfrocked monks, wandering students, who led a bohemian life of gaiety alternating with misery. In the early part of the fourteenth century these errant jongleurs ceased to be esteemed; the great lord attached a minstrel to his household, and poetry grew more dignified, more elaborate in its forms, more edifying in its intention, and in its dignity grew too often dull. Still for a time fabliaux were written; but the age of the jongleurs was over. *Virelais*, *rondeaux*, *ballades*, *chants royaux* were the newer fashion; and the old versified tale of mirth and ribaldry was by the middle of the century a thing of the past.

IV

The Romance of the Rose

The most extraordinary production in verse of the thirteenth century is undoubtedly *Le Roman de la Rose*. It is indeed no single achievement, but two very remarkable poems, written at two different periods, by two authors whose characters and gifts were not only alien, but opposed—two poems which reflect two different conditions of society. Of its twenty-two thousand octosyllabic lines, upwards of four thousand are the work of Guillaume de Lorris; the remainder is the work of a later writer, Jean de Meun.

Lorris is a little town situated between Orleans and Montargis. Here, about the year 1200, the earlier poet was born. He was a scholar, at least as far as knowledge of Latin extends, and learned above all in the lore of

love. He died young, probably before 1230, and during the five years that preceded his death the first part of *Le Roman de la Rose* was composed. Its subject is an allegorised tale of love, his own or imagined, transferred to the realm of dreams. The writer would fain win the heart of his beloved, and at the same time he would instruct all amorous spirits in the art of love. He is twenty years of age, in the May-morn of youth. He has beheld his beautiful lady, and been charmed by her fairness, her grace, her courtesy; she has received him with gentleness, but when he declares his love she grows alarmed. He gains at last the kiss which tells of her affection; but her parents intervening, throw obstacles between the lovers. Such, divested of ornament, allegory, and personification, is the theme of the poem.

To pluck the rose in the garden of delight is to win the maiden; her fears, her virgin modesty and pride, her kindness, her pity, are the company of friends or foes by whom the rose is surrounded; and to harmonise the real and the ideal, all the incidents are placed in the setting of a dream. Wandering one spring morning by the river-banks, the dreamer finds himself outside the walls of a fair orchard, owned by Déduit (Pleasure), of which the portress is Oiseuse (Idleness); on the walls are painted figures of Hatred, Envy, Sadness, Old Age, Poverty, and other evil powers; but unterrified by these, he enters, and finds a company of dancers on the turf, among whom is Beauty, led by the god of Love. Surrounded by a thorny hedge is the rosebud on which all his desire now centres. He is wounded by the arrows of Love, does homage to the god, and learns his commandments and the evils and the gains of love. Invited by Bel-Accueil, the son of Courtoisie, to ap-

proach the rose, he is driven back by Danger and his companions, the guardians of the blossom. Raison descends from a tower and discourses against the service of Love; Ami offers his consolations; at length the lover is again admitted to the flowery precinct, finds his rosebud half unclosed, and obtains the joy of a kiss. But Jealousy raises an unscalable wall around the rose; the serviceable Bel-Accueil is imprisoned, and with a long lament of the lover, the poem (line 4068) closes.

Did Guillaume de Lorris ever complete his poem, or did he die while it was still but half composed? We may conjecture that it wanted little to reach some dénouement — perhaps the fulfilment of the lover's hopes; and it is not impossible that a lost fragment actually brought the love-tale to its issue. But even if the story remained without an end, we possess in Guillaume's poem a complete mediæval Art of Love; and if the amorous metaphysics are sometimes cold, conventional, or laboured, we have gracious allegories, pieces of brilliant description, vivid personifications, and something of ingenious analysis of human passion. Nevertheless the work of this Middle-Age disciple of Ovid and of Chrétien de Troyes owes more than half its celebrity to the continuation, conceived in an entirely opposite spirit, by his successor, Jean de Meun.

The contrast is striking: Guillaume de Lorris was a refined and graceful exponent of the conventional doctrine of love, a seemly celebrant in the cult of woman, an ingenious decorator of accepted ideas; Jean de Meun was a passionate and positive spirit, an ardent speculator in social, political, and scientific questions, one who cared nothing for amorous subtleties, and held woman in scorn.

Guillaume addressed an aristocratic audience, imbued with the sentiments of chivalry; Jean was a bourgeois, eager to instruct, to arouse, to inflame his fellows in a multitude of matters which concerned the welfare of their lives. He was little concerned for the lover and his rose, but was deeply interested in the condition of society, the corruptions of religion, the advance of knowledge. He turned from ideals which seemed spurious to reason and to nature; he had read widely in Latin literature, and found much that suited his mood and mind in Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiæ* and in the *De Planctu Naturæ* of the "universal doctor" of the twelfth century, Alain de Lille, from each of which he conveyed freely into his poem. Of his life we know little; Jean Clopinel was born at Meun on the Loire about the year 1240; he died before the close of 1305; his continuation of Guillaume's *Roman* was made about 1270. His later poems, a *Testament*, in which he warned and exhorted his contemporaries of every class, the *Codicille*, which incited to almsgiving, and his numerous translations, prove the unabated energy of his mind in his elder years.

The rose is plucked by the lover in the end; but lover and rose are almost forgotten in Jean's zeal in setting forth his views of life, and in forming an encyclopædia of the knowledge of his time. Reason discourses on the dangers of passion, commends friendship or universal philanthropy as wiser than love, warns against the instability of fortune and the deceits of riches, and sets charity high above justice; if love be commendable, it is as the device of nature for the continuation of the species. The way to win woman and to keep her loyalty is now the unhappy way of squandered largess; formerly

it was not so in the golden age of equality, before private property was known, when all men held in common the goods of the earth, and robber kings were evils of the future. The god of Love and his barons, with the hypocrite monk Faux-Semblant—a bitter satirist of the mendicant orders — besiege the tower in which Bel-Accueil is imprisoned, and by force and fraud an entrance is effected. The old beldame, who watches over the captive, is corrupted by promises and gifts, and frankly exposes her own iniquities and those of her sex. War is waged against the guardians of the rose, Venus, sworn enemy of chastity, aiding the assailants. Nature, devoted to the continuance of the race, mourns over the violation of her laws by man, unburdens herself of all her scientific lore in a confession to her chaplain Génius, and sends him forth to encourage the lover's party with a bold discourse against the crime of virginity. The triumph of the lover closes the poem.

The graceful design of the earlier poet is disregarded; the love-story becomes a mere frame for setting forth the views of Jean de Meun, his criticism of the chivalric ideal, his satire upon the monkish vices, his revolutionary notions respecting property and government, his advanced opinions in science, his frank realism as to the relations of man and woman. He possesses all the learning of his time, and an accomplished judgment in the literature which he had studied. He is a powerful satirist, and passages of narrative and description show that he had a poet's feeling for beauty; he handles the language with the strength and skill of a master. On the other hand, he lacks all sense of proportion, and cannot shape an imaginative plan; his prolixity wearies the reader, and it cannot be denied that as a moral reformer he some-

times topples into immorality. The success of the poem was extraordinary, and extended far beyond France. It was attacked and defended, and up to the time of Ronsard its influence on the progress of literature—encouraging, as it did, to excess the art of allegory and personification—if less than has commonly been alleged, was unquestionably important.

CHAPTER III

DIDACTIC LITERATURE—SERMONS—HISTORY

I

Didactic Literature

The didactic literature, moral and scientific, of the Middle Ages is abundant, and possesses much curious interest, but it is seldom original in substance, and seldom valuable from the point of view of literary style. In great part it is translated or derived from Latin sources. The writers were often clerks or laymen who had turned from the vanities of youth—fabliau or romance—and now aimed at edification or instruction. Science in the hands of the clergy must needs be spiritualised and moralised; there were sermons to be found in stones, pious allegories in beast and bird; mystic meanings in the alphabet, in grammar, in the chase, in the tourney, in the game of chess. Ovid and Virgil were sanctified to religious uses. The earliest versified Bestiary, which is also a Volucrary, a Herbary, and a Lapidary, that of Philippe de Thaon (before 1135), is versified from the Latin *Physiologus*, itself a translation from the work of an Alexandrian Greek of the second century. In its symbolic zoology the lion and the pelican are emblems of Christ; the unicorn is God; the crocodile is the devil; the stones "turrobolen," which blaze when they approach each

other, are representative of man and woman. A *Bestiaire d'Amour* was written by Richard de Fournival, in which the emblems serve for the interpretation of human love. A Lapidary, with a medical—not a moral—purpose, by Marbode, Bishop of Rennes, was translated more than once into French, and had, indeed, an European fame.

Bestiaries and Lapidaries form parts of the vast encyclopædias, numerous in the thirteenth century, which were known by such names as *Image du Monde*, *Mappemonde*, *Miroir du Monde*. Of these encyclopædias, the only one which has a literary interest is the *Trésor* (1265), by Dante's master, Brunetto Latini, who wrote in French in preference to his native Italian. In it science escapes not wholly from fantasy and myth, but at least from the allegorising spirit; his ethics and rhetoric are derived from Latin originals; his politics are his own. The *Somme des Vices et des Vertus*, compiled in 1279 by Friar Lorens, is a well-composed *trésor* of religion and morals. Part of its contents has become familiar to us through the Canterbury discourse of Chaucer's parson. The moral experience of a man of the world is summed up in the prose treatise on "The Four Ages of Man," by Philippe de Novare, chancellor of Cyprus. With this edifying work may be grouped the so-called *Chastiements*, counsels on education and conduct, designed for readers in general or for some special class—women, children, persons of knightly or of humble rank; studies of the virtues of chivalry, the rules of courtesy and of manners.[1] Other writings, the *États du*

[1] Two works of the fourteenth century, interesting in the history of manners and ideas, may here be mentioned—the *Livre du Chevalier de la Tour-Landry* (1372), composed for the instruction of the writer's daughters, and the *Ménagier de Paris*, a treatise on domestic economy, written by a Parisian bourgeois for the use of his young wife.

Monde, present a view of the various classes of society from a standpoint ethical, religious, or satirical, with warnings and exhortations, which commonly conclude with a vision of the last judgment and the pains of hell. With such a scene of terror closes the interesting *Poème Moral* of Étienne de Fougères, in which the life of St. Moses, the converted robber, serves as an example to monks, and that of the converted Thais to ladies who are proud of their beauty. Its temper of moderation contrasts with the bitter satire in the *Bible* by Guiot de Provins, and with many shorter satirical pieces directed against clerical vices or the infirmities of woman. The *Besant de Dieu*, by Guillaume le Clerc, a Norman poet (1227), preaches in verse, with eloquence and imaginative power, the love of God and contempt of the world from the texts of two Scripture parables—that of the Talents and that of the Bridegroom; Guillaume anticipates the approaching end of the world, foreshown by wars, pestilence, and famine, condemns in the spirit of Christian charity the persecution of the Albigenses, and mourns over the shame that has befallen the Holy Sepulchre.

Among the preacher poets of the thirteenth century the most interesting personally is the minstrel RUTEBEUF, who towards the close of his gay though ragged life turned to serious thoughts, and expressed his penitent feelings with penetrating power. Rutebeuf, indeed—the Villon of his age—deployed his vivid and ardent powers in many directions, as a writer of song and satire, of allegory, of fabliaux, of drama. On each and all he impressed his own personality; the lyric note, imaginative fire, colour, melody, these were gifts that compensated the poet's poverty, his conjugal miseries, his lost eye, his

faithless friends, his swarming adversaries. The personification of vices and virtues, occasional in the *Besant* and other poems, becomes a system in the *Songe d'Enfer*, a pilgrim's progress to hell, and the *Voie de Paradis*, a pilgrim's progress to heaven, by Raoul de Houdan (after 1200). The *Pèlerinage de la Vie Humaine*—another "way to Paradise"; the *Pèlerinage de l'Âme*—a vision of hell, purgatory, and heaven; and the *Pèlerinage de Jésus-Christ*—a narrative of the Saviour's life, by Guillaume de Digulleville (fourteenth century), have been imagined by some to have been among the sources of Bunyan's allegories. Human life may be represented in one aspect as a pilgrimage; in another it is a knightly encounter; there is a great strife between the powers of good and evil; in *Le Tornoiement Antecrist*, by Huon de Méri, Jesus and the Knights of the Cross, among whom, besides St. Michael, St. Gabriel, Confession, Chastity, and Alms, are Arthur, Launcelot, and Gawain, contend against Antichrist and the infernal barons—Jupiter, Neptune, Beelzebub, and a crowd of allegorical personages. But the battles and *débats* of a chivalric age were not only religious; there are battles of wine and water, battles of fast and feasting, battles of the seven arts. A disputation between the body and the soul, a favourite subject for separate treatment by mediæval poets, is found also in one of the many sermons in verse; the *Débat des Trois Morts et des Trois Vifs* recalls the subject of the memorable painting in the Campo Santo at Pisa.

II

Sermons

The Latin sermons of the Middle Ages were countless; but it is not until Gerson and the close of the fourteenth century that we find a series of discourses by a known preacher written and pronounced in French. It is maintained that these Latin sermons, though prepared in the language of the Church, were delivered, when addressed to lay audiences, in the vernacular, and that those composite sermons in the macaronic style, that is, partly in French, partly in Latin, which appear in the thirteenth century and are frequent in the fifteenth, were the work of reporters or redactors among the auditory. On the other hand, it is argued that both Latin and French sermons were pronounced as each might seem suitable, before the laity, and that the macaronic style was actually practised in the pulpit. Perhaps we may accept the opinion that the short and simple homilies designed for the people, little esteemed as compositions, were rarely thought worthy of preservation in a Latin form; those discourses which remain to us, if occasionally used before an unlearned audience, seem to have been specially intended for clerkly hearers. The sermons of St. Bernard, which have been preserved in Latin and in a French translation of the thirteenth century, were certainly not his eloquent popular improvisations; they are doctrinal, with crude or curious allegorisings of Holy Scripture. Those of Maurice de Sully, Archbishop of Paris, probably also translated from the Latin, are simpler in manner and more practical in their teach-

ing; but in these characteristics they stand apart from the other sermons of the twelfth century.

It was not until the mendicant orders, Franciscans and Dominicans, began their labours that preaching, as preserved to us, was truly laicised and popularised. During the thirteenth century the work of the pulpit came to be conceived as an art which could be taught; collections of anecdotes and illustrations—*exempla*—for the enlivening of sermons, manuals for the use of preachers were formed; rules and precepts were set forth; themes for popular discourse were proposed and enlarged upon, until at length original thought and invention ceased; the preacher's art was turned into an easy trade. The effort to be popular often resulted in pulpit buffoonery. When GERSON preached at court or to the people towards the close of the fourteenth century, gravely exhorting high and low to practical duties, with tender or passionate appeals to religious feeling, his sermons were noble exceptions to the common practice. And the descent from Gerson to even his more eminent successors is swift and steep. The orators of the pulpit varied their discourse from burlesque mirth or bitter invective to gross terrors, in which death and judgment, Satan and hell-fire were largely displayed. The sermons of Michel Menot and Olivier Maillard, sometimes eloquent in their censure of sin, sometimes trivial or grotesque, sometimes pedantic in their exhibition of learning, have at least an historical value in presenting an image of social life in the fifteenth century.

A word must be said of the humanism which preceded the Renaissance. Scholars and students there were in France two hundred years before the days of Erasmus and of Budé; but they were not scholars inspired by

genius, and they contented themselves with the task of translators, undertaken chiefly with a didactic purpose. If they failed to comprehend the spirit of antiquity, none the less they did something towards quickening the mind of their own time and rendering the French language less inadequate to the intellectual needs of a later age. All that was then known of Livy's history was rendered into French in 1356 by the friend of Petrarch, Pierre Berçuire. On the suggestion of Charles V., Nicole Oresme translated from the Latin the Ethics, Politics, and Economics of Aristotle. It was to please the king that the aged Raoul de Presles prepared his version of St. Augustine's *De Civitate Dei*, and Denis Foulechat, with very scanty scholarship, set himself to render the *Polycraticus* of John of Salisbury. The dukes of Bourbon, of Berry, of Burgundy, were also patrons of letters and encouraged their translators. We cannot say how far this movement of scholarship might have progressed, if external conditions had favoured its development. In Jean de Montreuil, secretary of Charles VI., the devoted student of Cicero, Virgil, and Terence, we have an example of the true humanist before the Renaissance. But the seeming dawn was a deceptive aurora; the early humanism of France was clouded and lost in the tempests of the Hundred Years' War.

III

History

While the mediæval historians, compilers, and abbreviators from records of the past laboured under all the disadvantages of an age deficient in the critical spirit,

and produced works of little value either for their substance or their literary style, the chroniclers, who told the story of their own times, Villehardouin, Joinville, Froissart, Commines, and others, have bequeathed to us, in living pictures or sagacious studies of events and their causes, some of the chief treasures of the past. History at first, as composed for readers who knew no Latin, was comprised in those *chansons de geste* which happened to deal with matter that was not wholly—or almost wholly—the creation of fancy. Narrative poems treating of contemporary events came into existence with the Crusades, but of these the earliest have not survived, and we possess only rehandlings of their matter in the style of romance. What happened in France might be supposed to be known to persons of intelligence; what happened in the East was new and strange. But England, like the East, was foreign soil, and the Anglo-Norman trouvères of the eleventh and twelfth centuries busied themselves with copious narratives in rhyme, such as Gaimar's *Estorie des Engles* (1151), Wace's *Brut* (1155) and his *Roman de Rou*, which, if of small literary importance, remain as monuments in the history of the language. The murder of Becket called forth the admirable life of the saint by Garnier de Pont-Sainte-Maxence, founded upon original investigations; Henry II.'s conquest of Ireland was related by an anonymous writer; his victories over the Scotch (1173–1174) were strikingly described by Jordan Fantosme. But by far the most remarkable piece of versified history of this period, remarkable alike for its historical interest and its literary merit, is the *Vie de Guillaume le Maréchal*—William, Earl of Pembroke, guardian of Henry III.—a poem of nearly twenty thousand octosyllabic lines by an un-

known writer, discovered by M. Paul Meyer in the library of Sir Thomas Phillipps. "The masterpiece of Anglo-Norman historiography," writes M. Langlois, "is assuredly this anonymous poem, so long forgotten, and henceforth classic."

Prose, however, in due time proved itself to be the fitting medium for historical narrative, and verse was given over to the extravagances of fantasy. Compilations from the Latin, translations from the pseudo-Turpin, from Geoffrey of Monmouth, from Sallust, Suetonius, and Cæsar were succeeded by original record and testimony. GEOFFROY DE VILLEHARDOUIN, born between 1150 and 1164, Marshal of Champagne in 1191, was appointed eight years later to negotiate with the Venetians for the transport of the Crusaders to the East. He was probably a chief agent in the intrigue which diverted the fourth Crusade from its original destination—the Holy Land—to the assault upon Constantinople. In the events which followed he had a prominent part; before the close of 1213 Villehardouin was dead. During his last years he dictated the unfinished Memoirs known as the *Conquête de Constantinople*, which relate the story of his life from 1198 to 1207. Villehardouin is the first chronicler who impresses his own personality on what he wrote: a brave leader, skilful in resource, he was by no means an enthusiast possessed by the more extravagant ideas of chivalry; much more was he a politician and diplomatist, with material interests well in view; not, indeed, devoid of a certain imaginative wonder at the marvels of the East; not without his moments of ardour and excitement; deeply impressed with the feeling of feudal loyalty, the sense of the bond between the suzerain and his

vassal; deeply conscious of the need of discipline in great adventures; keeping in general a cool head, which could calculate the sum of profit and loss.

It is probable that Villehardouin knew too much of affairs, and was too experienced a man of the world to be quite frank as a historian: we can hardly believe, as he would have us, that the diversion of the crusading host from its professed objects was unpremeditated; we can perceive that he composes his narrative so as to form an apology; his recital has been justly described as, in part at least, "un mémoire justificatif." Nevertheless, there are passages, such as that which describes the first view of Constantinople, where Villehardouin's feelings seize upon his imagination, and, as it were, overpower him. In general he writes with a grave simplicity, sometimes with baldness, disdaining ornament, little sensible to colour or grace of style; but by virtue of his clear intelligence and his real grasp of facts his chronicle acquires a certain literary dignity, and when his words become vivid we know that it is because he had seen with inquisitive eyes and felt with genuine ardour. Happily for students of history, while Villehardouin presents the views of an aristocrat and a diplomatist, the incidents of the same extraordinary adventure can be seen, as they struck a simple soldier, in the record of Robert de Clari, which may serve as a complement and a counterpoise to the chronicle of his more illustrious contemporary. The unfinished *Histoire de l'Empereur Henri*, which carries on the narrative of events for some years subsequent to those related by Villehardouin, the work of Henri de Valenciennes, is a prose redaction of what had originally formed a *chanson de geste*.

The versified chronicle or history in the thirteenth century declined among Anglo-Norman writers, but was continued in Flanders and in France. Prose translations and adaptations of Latin chronicles, ancient and modern, were numerous, but the literary value of many of these is slight. In the Abbey of Saint-Denis a corpus of national history in Latin had for a long while been in process of formation. Utilising this corpus and the works from which it was constructed, one of the monks of the Abbey—perhaps a certain Primat—compiled, in the second half of the century, a History of France in the vernacular—the *Grandes Chroniques de Saint-Denis*—with which later additions were from time to time incorporated, until under Charles V. the *Grandes Chroniques de France* attained their definitive form.[1] Far more interesting as a literary composition is the little work known as *Récits d'un Ménestrel de Reims* (1260), a lively, graceful, and often dramatic collection of traditions, anecdotes, dialogues, made rather for the purposes of popular entertainment than of formal instruction, and expressing the ideas of the middle classes on men and things. Forgotten during several centuries, it remains to us as one of the happiest records of the mediæval spirit.

But among the prose narratives to which the thirteenth century gave birth, the *Histoire de Saint Louis*, by JEAN DE JOINVILLE, stands pre-eminent. Joinville, born about 1224, possessed of such literary culture as could be gained at the Court of Thibaut IV. of Champagne, became a favoured companion of the chivalric and saintly Louis during his six years' Crusade from 1248 to 1254. The memory of the King remained the most precious pos-

[1] The *Chroniques* were continued by lay writers to the accession of Louis XI.

session of his follower's elder years. It is probable that soon after 1272 Joinville prepared an autobiographic fragment, dealing with that period of his youth which had been his age of adventure. When he was nearly eighty, Jeanne of Navarre, wife of Philippe le Bel, invited the old seneschal to put on record the holy words and good deeds of Saint Louis. Joinville willingly acceded to the request, and incorporating the fragment of autobiography, in which the writer appeared in close connection with his King, he had probably almost completed his work at the date of Queen Jeanne's death (April 2, 1305); to her son, afterwards Louis X., it was dedicated. His purpose was to recite the pious words and set forth the Christian virtues of the royal Saint in one book of the History, and to relate his chivalric actions in the other; but Joinville had not the art of construction, he suffered from the feebleness of old age, and he could not perfectly accomplish his design; in 1317 Joinville died. Deriving some of his materials from other memoirs of the King, especially those by Geoffroy de Beaulieu and Guillaume de Nangis, he drew mainly upon his own recollections. Unhappily the most authoritative manuscripts of the *Histoire de Saint Louis* have been lost; we possess none earlier than the close of the fourteenth century; but by the learning and skill of a modern editor the text has been substantially established.

We must not expect from Joinville precision of chronology or exactitude in the details of military operations. His recollections crowd upon him; he does not marshal them by power of intellect, but abandons himself to the delights of memory. He is a frank, amiable, spirited talker, who has much to tell; he succeeds in giving us

two admirable portraits—his own and that of the King; and unconsciously he conveys into his narrative both the chivalric spirit of his time, and a sense of those prosaic realities which tempered the ideals of chivalry. What his eyes had rested on lives in his memory, with all its picturesque features, all its lines and colours, undimmed by time; and his curious eyes had been open to things great and small. He appears as a brave soldier, but, he confesses, capable of mortal fear; sincerely devout, but not made for martyrdom; zealous for his master's cause, but not naturally a chaser of rainbow dreams; one who enjoys good cheer, who prefers his wine unallayed with water, who loves splendid attire, who thinks longingly of his pleasant château, and the children awaiting his return; one who will decline future crusading, and who believes that a man of station may serve God well by remaining in his own fields among his humble dependants. But Joinville felt deeply the attraction of a nature more under the control of high, ideal motives than was his own; he would not himself wash the feet of the poor; he would rather commit thirty mortal sins than be a leper; but a kingly saint may touch heights of piety which are unattainable by himself. And, at the same time, he makes us feel that Louis is not the less a man because he is a saint. Certain human infirmities of temper are his; yet his magnanimity, his sense of justice, his ardent devotion, his charity, his pure self-surrender are made so sensible to us as we read the record of Joinville that we are willing to subscribe to the sentence of Voltaire: "It is not given to man to carry virtue to a higher point."

During the fourteenth century the higher spirit of feudalism declined; the old faith and the old chivalry were suffering a decay; the bourgeoisie grew in power

and sought for instruction; it was an age of prose, in which learning was passing to the laity, or was adapted to their uses. Yet, while the inner life of chivalry failed day by day, and self-interest took the place of heroic self-surrender, the external pomp and decoration of the feudal world became more brilliant than ever. War was a trade practised from motives of vulgar cupidity; but it was adorned with splendour, and had a show of gallantry. The presenter in literature of this glittering spectacle is the historian JEAN FROISSART. Born in 1338, at Valenciennes, of bourgeois parents, Froissart, at the age of twenty-two, a disappointed lover, a tonsured clerk, and already a poet, journeyed to London, with his manuscript on the battle of Poitiers as an offering to his countrywoman, Queen Philippa of Hainault. For nearly five years he was the *ditteur* of the Queen, a sharer in the life of the court, but attracted before all else to those "ancient knights and squires who had taken part in feats of arms, and could speak of them rightly." His patroness encouraged Froissart's historical inquiries. In the *Chroniques* of Jean le Bel, canon of Liège, he found material ready to his hand, and freely appropriated it in many of his most admirable pages; but he also travelled much through England and Scotland, noting everything that impressed his imagination, and gathering with delight the testimony of those who had themselves been actors in the events of the past quarter of a century. He accompanied the Black Prince to Aquitaine, and, later, the Duke of Clarence to Milan. The death of Queen Philippa, in 1369, was ruinous to his prospects. For a time he supported himself as a trader in his native place. Then other patrons, kinsfolk of the Queen, came to his aid. The first revised redaction of the first book of his

Chronicles was his chief occupation while curé of Lestinnes; it is a record of events from 1325 to the death of Edward III., and its brilliant narrative of events still recent or contemporary insured its popularity with aristocratic readers. Under the influence of Queen Philippa's brother-in-law, Robert of Namur, it is English in its sympathies and admirations. Unhappily Froissart was afterwards moved by his patron, Gui de Blois, to rehandle the book in the French interest; and once again in his old age his work was recast with a view to effacing the large debt which he owed to his predecessor, Jean le Bel. The first redaction is, however, that which won and retained the general favour. If his patron induced Froissart to wrong his earlier work, he made amends, for it is to Gui de Blois that we owe the last three books of the history, which bring the tale of events down to the assassination of Richard II. Still the curé of Lestinnes and the canon of Chimai pursued his early method of travel—to the court of Gaston, Count of Foix, to Flanders, to England—ever eager in his interrogation of witnesses. It is believed that he lived to the close of 1404, but the date of his death is uncertain.

Froissart as a poet wrote gracefully in the conventional modes of his time. His vast romance *Méliador*, to which Wenceslas, Duke of Brabant, contributed the lyric part —famous in its day, long lost and recently recovered—is a construction of external marvels and splendours which lacks the inner life of imaginative faith. But as a brilliant scene-painter Froissart the chronicler is unsurpassed. His chronology, even his topography, cannot be trusted as exact; he is credulous rather than critical; he does not always test or control the statements of his informants; he is misled by their prejudices and passions; he views

all things from the aristocratic standpoint; the life of the common people does not interest him; he has no sense of their wrongs, and little pity for their sufferings; he does not study the deeper causes of events; he is almost incapable of reflection; he has little historical sagacity; he accepts appearances without caring to interpret their meanings. But what a vivid picture he presents of the external aspects of fourteenth-century life! What a joy he has in adventure! What an eye for the picturesque! What movement, what colour! What a dramatic—or should we say theatrical?—feeling for life and action! Much, indeed, of the vividness of Froissart's narrative may be due to the eye-witnesses from whom he had obtained information; but genius was needed to preserve —perhaps to enhance—the animation of their recitals. If he understood his own age imperfectly, he depicted its outward appearance with incomparable skill; and though his moral sense was shallow, and his knowledge of character far from profound, he painted portraits which live in the imagination of his readers.

The fifteenth century is rich in historical writings of every kind—compilations of general history, domestic chronicles, such as the *Livre des Faits du bon Messire Jean le Maingre, dit Bouciquaut*, official chronicles both of the French and Burgundian parties, journals and memoirs. The Burgundian Enguerrand de Monstrelet was a lesser Froissart, faithful, laborious, a transcriber of documents, but without his predecessor's genius. On the French side the so-called *Chronique Scandaleuse*, by Jean de Roye, a Parisian of the time of Louis XI., to some extent redeems the mediocrity of the writers of his party.

In PHILIPPE DE COMMINES we meet the last chronicler

of the Middle Ages, and the first of modern historians. Born about 1445, in Flanders, of the family of Van den Clyte, Commines, whose parents died early, received a scanty education ; but if he knew no Latin, his acquaintance with modern languages served him well. At first in the service of Charles the Bold, in 1472 he passed over to the cause of Louis XI. His treason to the Duke may be almost described as inevitable ; for Commines could not attach himself to violence and folly, and was naturally drawn to the counsels of civil prudence. The bargain was as profitable to his new master as to the servant. On the King's death came a reverse of fortune for Commines : for eight months he was cramped in the iron cage ; during two years he remained a prisoner in the Conciergerie (1487–89), with enforced leisure to think of the preparation of his *Mémoires*.[1] Again the sunshine of royal favour returned ; he followed Charles VIII. to Italy, and was engaged in diplomatic service at Venice. In 1511 he died.

The *Mémoires* of Commines were composed as a body of material for a projected history of Louis XI. by Archbishop Angelo Cato ; the writer, apparently in all sincerity, hoped that his unlearned French might thus be translated into Latin, the language of scholars ; happily we possess the Memoirs as they left their author's mind. And, though Commines rather hides than thrusts to view his own personality, every page betrays the presence of a remarkable intellect. He was no artist either in imaginative design or literary execution ; he was before all else a thinker, a student of political phenomena, a searcher after the causes of events, an analyst of motives, a psychologist of individual char-

[1] Books I.–VI., written 1488 94 : Books VII., VIII., written 1494–95.

acter and of the temper of peoples, and, after a fashion, a moralist in his interpretation of history. He cared little, or not at all, for the coloured surface of life; his chief concern is to seize the master motive by which men and events are ruled, to comprehend the secret springs of action. He is aristocratic in his politics, monarchical, an advocate for the centralisation of power; but he would have the monarch enlightened, constitutional, and pacific. He values solid gains more than showy magnificence; and knowing the use of astuteness, he knows also the importance of good faith. He has a sense of the balance of European power, and anticipates Montesquieu in his theory of the influence of climates on peoples. There is something of pity, something of irony, in the view which he takes of the joyless lot of the great ones of the earth. Having ascertained how few of the combinations of events can be controlled by the wisest calculation, he takes refuge in a faith in Providence; he finds God necessary to explain this entangled world; and yet his morality is in great part that which tries good and evil by the test of success. By the intensity of his thought Commines sometimes becomes striking in his expression; occasionally he rises to a grave eloquence; occasionally his irony is touched by a bitter humour. But in general he writes with little sentiment and no sense of beauty, under the control of a dry and circumspect intelligence.

CHAPTER IV

LATEST MEDIÆVAL POETS—THE DRAMA

I

Latest Mediæval Poets

THE fourteenth and fifteenth centuries form a period of transition from the true Middle Ages to the Renaissance. The national epopee was dead; the Arthurian tales were rehandled in prose; under the influence of the *Roman de la Rose*, allegory was highly popular, and Jean de Meun had shown how it could be applied to the secularisation of learning; the middle classes were seeking for instruction. In lyric poetry the free creative spirit had declined, but the technique of verse was elaborated and reduced to rule; ballade, chant royal, lai, virelai, rondeau were the established forms, and lyric verse was often used for matter of a didactic, moral, or satirical tendency. Even Ovid was tediously moralised (*c.* 1300) in some seventy thousand lines by Chrétien Legouais. Literary societies or *puys*[1] were instituted, which maintained the rules of art, and awarded crowns to successful competitors in poetry; a formal ingenuity replaced lyrical inspiration; poetry accepted proudly the name of "rhetoric." At the same

[1] *Puy*, mountain, eminence, signifying the elevated seat of the judges of the artistic competition.

time there is gain in one respect—the poets no longer conceal their own personality behind their work: they instruct, edify, moralise, express their real or simulated passions in their own persons; if their art is mechanical, yet through it we make some acquaintance with the men and manners of the age.

The chief exponent of the new art of poetry was GUILLAUME DE MACHAUT. Born about 1300, he served as secretary to the King of Bohemia, who fell at Crécy. He enjoyed a tranquil old age in his province of Champagne, cultivating verse and music with the applause of his contemporaries. The ingenuities of gallantry are deployed at length in his *Jugement du Roi de Navarre;* he relates with dull prolixity the history of his patron, Pierre de Lusignan, King of Cyprus, in his *Prise d'Alexandrie;* the *Voir dit* relates in varying verse and prose the course of his sexagenarian love for a maiden in her teens, Peronne d'Armentières, who gratified her coquetry with an old poet's adoration, and then wedded his rival.

In the forms of his verse EUSTACHE DESCHAMPS, also a native of Champagne (*c.* 1345–1405), was a disciple of Machaut: if he was not a poet, he at least interests a reader by rhymed journals of his own life and the life of his time, written in the spirit of an honest bourgeois, whom disappointed personal hopes and public misfortune had early embittered. Eighty thousand lines, twelve hundred ballades, nearly two hundred rondeaux, a vast unfinished satire on woman, the *Miroir de Mariage*, fatigued even his own age, and the official court poet of France outlived his fame. He sings of love in the conventional modes; his historical poems, celebrating events of the day, have interest by virtue of their matter;

as a moralist in verse he deplores the corruption of high and low, the cupidity in Church and State, and, above all, applies his wit to expose the vices and infirmities of women. The earliest Poetic in French—*L'art de dictier et de fere chançons, balades, virelais, et rondeaulx* (1392)—is the work of Eustache Deschamps, in which the poet, by no means himself a master of harmonies, insists on the prime importance of harmony in verse.

The exhaustion of the mediæval sources of inspiration is still more apparent in the fifteenth-century successors of Deschamps. But already something of the reviving influence of Italian culture makes itself felt. CHRISTINE DE PISAN, Italian by her parentage and place of birth (*c.* 1363), was left a widow with three young children at the age of twenty-five. Her sorrow, uttered in verse, is a genuine lyric cry; but when in her poverty she practised authorship as a trade, while she wins our respect as a mother, the poetess is too often at once facile and pedantic. Christine was zealous in maintaining the honour of her sex against the injuries of Jean de Meun; in her prose *Cité des Dames* she celebrates the virtues and heroism of women, with examples from ancient and modern times; in the *Livre des Trois Vertus* she instructs women in their duties. When advanced in years, and sheltered in the cloister, she sang her swan-song in honour of Joan of Arc. Admirable in every relation of life, a patriot and a scholar, she only needed one thing —genius—to be a poet of distinction.

A legend relates that the Dauphiness, Margaret of Scotland, kissed the lips of a sleeper who was the ugliest man in France, because from that "precious mouth" had issued so many "good words and virtuous sayings." The sleeper was Christine's poetical successor, ALAIN

CHARTIER. His fame was great, and as a writer of prose he must be remembered with honour, both for his patriotic ardour, and for the harmonious eloquence (modelled on classical examples) in which that ardour found expression. His first work, the *Livre des Quatre Dames*, is in verse: four ladies lament their husbands slain, captured, lost, or fugitive and dishonoured, at Agincourt. Many of his other poems were composed as a distraction from the public troubles of the time; the title of one, widely celebrated in its own day, *La Belle Dame sans Mercy*, has obtained a new meaning of romance through its appropriation by Keats. In 1422 he wrote his prose *Quadrilogue Invectif*, in which suffering France implores the nobles, the clergy, the people to show some pity for her miserable state. If Froissart had not discerned the evils of the feudal system, they were patent to the eyes of Alain Chartier. His *Livre de l'Espérance*, where the oratorical prose is interspersed with lyric verse, spares neither the clergy nor the frivolous and dissolute gentry, who forget their duty to their country in wanton self-indulgence; yet his last word, written at the moment when Joan of Arc was leaving the pastures for battle, is one of hope. His *Curial* (*The Courtier*) is a satire on the vices of the court by one who had acquaintance with its corruption. The large, harmonious phrase of Alain Chartier was new to French prose, and is hardly heard again until the seventeenth century.

The last grace and refinements of chivalric society blossom in the poetry of CHARLES D'ORLÉANS, "la grâce exquise des choses frêles." He was born in 1391, son of Louis, Duke of Orleans, and an Italian mother, Valentine of Milan. Married at fifteen to the widow of Richard II. of England, he lost his father by assassination, his mother

by the stroke of grief, his wife in childbirth. From the battlefield of Agincourt he passed to England, where he remained a prisoner, closely guarded, for twenty-five years. It seems as if events should have made him a tragic poet; but for Charles d'Orléans poetry was the brightness or the consolation of his exile. His elder years at the little court of Blois were a season of delicate gaiety, when he enjoyed the recreations of age, and smiled at the passions of youth. He died in 1405. Neither depth of reflection nor masculine power of feeling finds expression in his verse; he does not contribute new ideas to poetry, nor invent new forms, but he rendered the old material and made the accepted moulds of verse charming by a gracious personality and an exquisite sense of art. Ballade, rondeau, chanson, each is manipulated with the skill of a goldsmith setting his gems. He sings of the beauty of woman, the lighter joys of love, the pleasure of springtide, the song of the birds, the gliding of a stream or a cloud; or, as an elder man, he mocks with amiable irony the fatiguing ardours of young hearts. When St. Valentine's day comes round, his good physician "Nonchaloir" advises him to abstain from choosing a mistress, and recommends an easy pillow. The influence of Charles d'Orléans on French poetry was slight; it was not until 1734 that his forgotten poems were brought to light.

In the close of the mediæval period, when old things were passing away and new things were as yet unborn, the minds of men inclined to fill the void with mockery and satire. Martin Lefranc (*c.* 1410–61) in his *Champion des Dames*—a poem of twenty-four thousand lines, in which there is much spirit and vigour of versification—balances one against another the censure and the praise

of women. Coquillard, with his railleries assuming legal forms and phrases, laughs at love and lovers, or at the *Droits Nouveaux* of a happy time when licence had become the general law. Henri Baude, a realist in his keen observation, satirises with direct, incisive force, the manners and morals of his age. Martial d'Auvergne (*c.* 1433–1508), chronicling events in his *Vigiles de Charles VII.*, a poem written according to the scheme of the liturgical Vigils, is eloquent in his expression of the wrongs of the poor, and in his condemnation of the abuses of power and station. If the *Amant rendu Cordelier* be his, he too appears among those who jest at the follies and extravagance of love. His prose *Arrêts d'Amour* are discussions and decisions of the imaginary court which determines questions of gallantry.

Amid such mockery of life and love, the horror of death was ever present to the mind of a generation from which hope and faith seemed to fail; it was the time of the *Danse Macabré;* the skeleton became a grim humourist satirising human existence, and verses written for the dance of women were ascribed in the manuscript which preserves them to Martial d'Auvergne.

Passion and the idea of death mingle with a power at once realistic and romantic in the poetry of FRANÇOIS VILLON. He was born in poverty, an obscure child of the capital, in 1430 or 1431; he adopted the name of his early protector, Villon; obtained as a poor scholar his bachelor's degree in 1449, and three years later became a *maître ès arts;* but already he was a master of arts less creditable than those of the University. In 1455 Villon—or should we call him Monterbier, Montcorbier, Corbueil, Desloges, Mouton (aliases convenient for vagabondage)?—quarrelled with a priest, and killed his adversary; he

was condemned to death, and cheered his spirits with the piteous ballade for those about to swing to the kites and the crows; but the capital punishment was commuted to banishment. Next winter, stung by the infidelity and insults of a woman to whom he had abandoned himself, he fled, perhaps to Angers, bidding his friends a jesting farewell in the bequests of his *Petit Testament*. Betrayed by one who claimed him as an associate in robbery, Villon is lost to view for three years; and when we rediscover him in 1461, it is as a prisoner, whose six months' fare has been bread and water in his cell at Meun-sur-Loire. The entry of Louis XI., recently consecrated king, freed the unhappy captive. Before the year closed he had composed his capital work, the *Grand Testament*, and proved himself the most original poet of his century. And then Villon disappears; whether he died soon after, whether he lived for half a score of years, we do not know.

While he handles with masterly ease certain of the fifteenth-century forms of verse—in particular the ballade—Villon is a modern in his abandonment of the traditional machinery of the imagination, its convention of allegories and abstractions, and those half-realised moralisings which were repeated from writer to writer; he is modern in the intensity of a personal quality which is impressed upon his work, in the complexity of his feelings, passing from mirth to despair, from beauty to horror, from cynical grossness to gracious memories or aspirations; he is modern in his passion for the real, and in those gleams of ideal light which are suddenly dashed across the vulgar surroundings of his sorry existence. While he flings out his scorn and indignation against those whom he regarded as his ill-users,

or cries against the injuries of fortune, or laments his miserable past, he yet is a passionate lover of life; and shadowing beauty and youth and love and life, he is constantly aware of the imminent and inexorable tyranny of death. The ideas which he expresses are few and simple—ideas common to all men; but they take a special colour from his own feelings and experiences, and he renders them with a poignancy which is his own, with a melancholy gaiety and a desperate imaginative sincerity. His figure is so interesting in itself—that of the *enfant perdu* of genius—and so typical of a class, that the temptation to create a Villon legend is great; but to magnify his proportions to those of the highest poets is to do him wrong. His passionate intensity within a limited range is unsurpassed; but Villon wanted sanity, and he wanted breadth.

In his direct inspiration from life, co-operating with an admirable skill and science in literary form, Villon stands alone. For others—Georges Chastelain, Meschinot, Molinet, Crétin—poetry was a cumbrous form of rhetoric, regulated by the rules of those arts of poetry which during the fifteenth century appeared at not infrequent intervals. The *grands rhétoriqueurs* with their complicated measures, their pedantic diction, their effete allegory, their points and puerilities, testify to the exhaustion of the Middle Ages, and to the need of new creative forces for the birth of a living literature.

There is life, however, in the work of one remarkable prose-writer of the time—ANTOINE DE LA SALLE. His residence in Rome (1422) had made him acquainted with the tales of the Italian *novellieri*; he was a friend of the learned and witty Poggio; René of Anjou entrusted to him the education of his son; when advanced

in years he became the author certainly of one masterpiece, probably of three. If he was the writer of the *Quinze joies de Mariage*, he knew how to mask a rare power of cynical observation under a smiling face: the Church had celebrated the fifteen joys of the Blessed Virgin; he would ironically depict the fifteen afflictions of wedded life, in scenes finely studied from the domestic interior. How far the *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles* are to be ascribed to him is doubtful; it is certain that these licentious tales reproduce, with a new skill in narrative prose, the spirit of indecorous mirth in their Italian models. The *Petit Jehan de Saintré* is certainly the work of Antoine de la Salle; the irony of a realist, endowed with subtlety and grace, conducts the reader through chivalric exaltations to vulgar disillusion. The writer was not insensible to the charm of the ideals of the past, but he presents them only in the end to cover them with disgrace. The anonymous farce of *Pathelin*, and the *Chronique de petit Jehan de Saintré*, are perhaps the most instructive documents which we possess with respect to the moral temper of the close of the Middle Ages; and there have been critics who have ventured to ascribe both works to the same hand.

II

The Drama

The mediæval drama in France, though of early origin, attained its full development only when the Middle Ages were approaching their term; its popularity continued during the first half of the sixteenth century. It waited for a public; with the growth of industry, the

uprising of the middle classes, it secured its audience, and in some measure filled the blank created by the disappearance of the *chansons de geste*. The survivals of the drama of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries are few; the stream, as we know, was flowing, but it ran underground.

The religious drama had its origin in the liturgical offices of the Church. At Christmas and at Easter the birth and resurrection of the Saviour were dramatically recited to the people by the clergy, within the consecrated building, in Latin paraphrases of the sacred text; but, as yet, neither Jesus nor His mother appeared as actors in the drama. By degrees the vernacular encroached upon the Latin and displaced it; the scene passed from the church to the public place or street; the action developed; and the actors were priests supported by lay-folk, or were lay-folk alone.

The oldest surviving drama written in French (but with interspersed liturgical sentences of Latin) is of the twelfth century—the *Représentation d'Adam*: the fall of man, and the first great crime which followed—the death of Abel—are succeeded by the procession of Messianic prophets. It was enacted outside the church, and the spectators were alarmed or diverted by demons who darted to and fro amidst the crowd. Of the thirteenth century, only two religious pieces remain. Jean Bodel, of Arras, was the author of *Saint Nicholas*. The poet, himself about to assume the cross, exhibits a handful of Crusaders in combat with the Mussulmans; all but one, a supplicant of the saint, die gloriously, with angelic applause and pity; whereupon the feelings of the audience are relieved by the mirth and quarrels of drinkers in a tavern, who would rob St. Nicholas of the

treasure entrusted to his safeguard; miracles, and general conversion of the infidels, conclude the drama. The miracle of *Théophile*, the ambitious priest who pawned his soul to Satan, and through our Lady's intercession recovered his written compact, is by the trouvère Rutebeuf. These are scanty relics of a hundred years; yet their literary value outweighs that of the forty-two *Miracles de Notre Dame* of the century which followed —rude pieces, often trivial, often absurd in their incidents, with mystic extravagance sanctifying their vulgar realism. They formed, with two exceptions, the dramatic repertory of some mediæval *puy*, an association half-literary, half-religious, devoted to the Virgin's honour; their rhymed octosyllabic verse — the special dramatic form—at times borders upon prose. One drama, and only one, of the fourteenth century, chooses another heroine than our Lady—the *Histoire de Griséldis*, which presents, with pathos and intermingling mirth, those marvels of wifely patience celebrated for other lands by Boccaccio, by Petrarch, and by Chaucer.

The fifteenth-century Mystery exhibits the culmination of the mediæval sacred drama. The word *mystère*,[1] first appropriated to tableaux vivants, is applied to dramatic performances in the royal privilege which in 1402 conferred upon the association known as the *Confrérie de la Passion* the right of performing the plays of our Redemption. Before this date the Blessed Virgin and the infant Jesus had appeared upon the scene. The Mystery presents the course of sacred story, derived from the Old and the New Testaments, together with the lives of the saints from apostolic times to the days

[1] Derived from *ministerium* (*métier*), but doubtless often drawing to itself a sense suggested by the *mysteries* of religion.

of St. Dominic and St. Louis; it even includes, in an extended sense, subjects from profane history — the siege of Orleans, the destruction of Troy—but such subjects are of rare occurrence during the fifteenth century.

For a hundred years, from 1450 onwards, an unbounded enthusiasm for the stage possessed the people, not of Paris merely, but of all France. The *Confrères de la Passion*, needing a larger repertoire, found in young ARNOUL GREBAN, bachelor in theology, an author whose vein was copious. His *Passion*, written about the middle of the fifteenth century, embraces the entire earthly life of Christ in its thirty-four thousand verses, which required one hundred and fifty performers and four crowded days for the delivery. Its presentation was an unprecedented event in the history of the theatre. The work of Greban was rehandled and enlarged by Jean Michel, and great was the triumph when it was given at Angers in 1486. Greban was not to be outdone either by his former self or by another dramatist; in collaboration with his brother Simon, he composed the yet more enormous *Actes des Apôtres*, in sixty-two thousand lines, demanding the services of five hundred performers. When presented at Bourges as late as 1536, the happiness of the spectators was extended over no fewer than forty days. The Mystery of the Old Testament, selecting whatever was supposed to typify or foreshadow the coming of the Messiah, is only less vast, and is not less incoherent. Taken together, the Mysteries comprise over a million verses, and what remains is but a portion of what was written.

Though the literary value of the Mysteries is slight, except in occasional passages of natural feeling or just characterisation, their historical importance was great;

they met a national demand—they constituted an animated and moving spectacle of universal interest. A certain unity they possessed in the fact that everything revolved around the central figure of Christ and the central theme of man's salvation ; but such unity is only to be discovered in a broad and distant view. Near at hand the confusion seems great. Their loose construction and unwieldy length necessarily endangered their existence when a truer feeling for literary art was developed. The solemnity of their matter gave rise to a further danger ; it demanded some relief, and that relief was secured by the juxtaposition of comic scenes beside scenes of gravest import. Such comedy was occasionally not without grace—a passage of pastoral, a song, a naïve piece of gaiety ; but buffoonery or vulgar riot was more to the taste of the populace. It was pushed to the furthest limit, until in 1548 the Parlement of Paris thought fit to interdict the performance of sacred dramas which had lost the sense of reverence and even of common propriety. They had scandalised serious Protestants ; the Catholics declined to defend what was indefensible ; the humanists and lovers of classical art in Renaissance days thought scorn of the rude mediæval drama. Though it died by violence, its existence could hardly have been prolonged for many years. But in the days of its popularity the performance of a mystery set a whole city in motion ; carpenters, painters, costumiers, machinists were busy in preparation ; priests, scholars, citizens rehearsed their parts ; country folk crowded to every hostelry and place of lodging. On the day preceding the first morning of performance the personages, duly attired — Christians, Jews, Saracens, kings, knights, apostles, priests — defiled

through the streets on their way to the cathedral to mass. The vast stage hard by the church presented, with primitive properties, from right to left, the succession of places — lake, mountain, manger, prison, banquet-chamber — in which the action should be imagined; and from one station to another the actors passed as the play proceeded. At one end of the stage rose heaven, where God sat throned; at the other, hell-mouth gaped, and the demons entered or emerged. Music aided the action; the drama was tragedy, comedy, opera, pantomime in one. The actors were amateurs from every class of society — clergy, scholars, tradesmen, mechanics, occasionally members of the *noblesse*. In Paris the Confraternity of the Passion had almost an exclusive right to present these sacred plays; in the provinces associations were formed to carry out the costly and elaborate performance. To the *Confrères de la Passion*—bourgeois folk and artisans—belonged the first theatre, and it was they who first presented plays at regular intervals. From the Hospital of the Trinity, originally a shelter for pilgrims, they migrated in 1539 to the Hôtel de Flandres, and thence in 1548 to the Hôtel de Bourgogne. Their famous place of performance passed in time into the hands of professional actors; but it was not until 1676 that the Confrérie ceased to exist.

Comedy, unlike the serious drama, suffered no breach of continuity during its long history. The jongleurs of the Middle Ages were the immediate descendants of the Roman mimes and histrions; their declamations, accompanied by gestures, at least tended towards the dramatic form. Classical comedy was never wholly forgotten in the schools; the liturgical drama and the

sacred pieces developed from it had an indirect influence as encouraging dramatic feeling, and providing models which could be applied to other uses. The earliest surviving *jeux* are of Arras, the work of ADAM DE LA HALLE. In the *Jeu d'Adam* or *de la Feuillée* (*c.* 1262) satirical studies of real life mingle strangely with fairy fantasy; the poet himself, lamenting his griefs of wedlock, his father, his friends are humorously introduced; the fool and the physician play their laughable parts; and the three fay ladies, for whom the citizens have prepared a banquet under *la feuillée*, grant or refuse the wishes of the mortal folk in the traditional manner of enchantresses amiable or perverse. The *Jeu de Robin et Marion*—first performed at Naples in 1283—is a pastoral comic opera, with music, song, and dance; the good Marion is loyal to her rustic lover, and puts his rival, her cavalier admirer, to shame. These were happy inventions happily executed; but they stand alone. It is not until we reach the fifteenth century that mediæval comedy, in various forms, attained its true evolution.

The Moralities, of which sixty-five survive, dating, almost all, from 1450 to 1550, differed from the Mysteries in the fact that their purpose was rather didactic than religious; as a rule they handled neither historical nor legendary matter; they freely employed allegorical personification after the fashion of the *Roman de la Rose*. The general type is well exemplified in *Bien-Avisé, Mal-Avisé*, a kind of dramatic Pilgrim's Progress, with two pilgrims—one who is instructed in the better way by all the personified powers which make for righteousness; the other finding his companions on the primrose path, and arriving at the everlasting bonfire. Certain Moralities attack a par-

ticular vice—gluttony or blasphemy, or the dishonouring of parents. From satirising the social vices of the time, the transition was easy to political satire or invective. In the sixteenth century both the partisans of the Reformation and the adherents to the traditional creed employed the Morality as a medium for ecclesiastical polemics. Sometimes treating of domestic manners and morals, it became a kind of bourgeois drama, presenting the conditions under which character is formed. Sometimes again it approached the farce: two lazy mendicants, one blind, the other lame, fear that they may suffer a cure and lose their trade through the efficacy of the relics of St. Martin; the halt, mounted on the other's back, directs his fellow in their flight; by ill luck they encounter the relic-bearers, and are restored in eye and limb; the recovered cripple swears and rages; but the man born blind, ravished by the wonders of the world, breaks forth in praise to God. The higher Morality naturally selected types of character for satire or commendation. It is easy to perceive how such a comic art as that of Molière lay in germ in this species of the mediæval drama. At a late period examples are found of the historical Morality. The pathetic *l'Empereur qui tua son Neveu* exhibits in its action and its stormy emotion something of tragic power. The advent of the pseudo-classical tragedy of the Pléiade checked the development of this species. The very name "Morality" disappears from the theatre after 1550.

The *sottie*, like the Morality, was a creation of the fifteenth century. Whether it had its origin in a laicising of the irreverent celebration of the Feast of Fools, or in that parade of fools which sometimes preceded a Mystery, it was essentially a farce, but a farce in which

the performers, arrayed in motley, and wearing the long-eared cap, distributed between them the several rôles of human folly. Associations of *sots*, known in Paris as *Enfants sans Souci*, known in other cities by other names, presented the unwisdom or madness of the world in parody. The *sottie* at times rose from a mere diversion to satire; like the Morality, it could readily adapt itself to political criticism. The *Gens Nouveaux*, belonging perhaps to the reign of Louis XI., mocks the hypocrisy of those sanguine reformers who promise to create the world anew on a better model, and yet, after all, have no higher inspiration than that old greed for gold and power and pleasure which possessed their predecessors. Louis XII., who permitted free comment on public affairs from actors on the stage, himself employed the poet Pierre Gringoire to satirise his adversary the Pope. In 1512 the *Jeu du Prince des Sots* was given in Paris; Gringoire, the *Mère-Sotte*, but wearing the Papal robes to conceal for a time the garb of folly, discharged a principal part. Such dangerous pleasantries as this were vigorously restrained by François I.

A dramatic monologue or a *sermon joyeux* was commonly interposed between the *sottie* and the Morality or miracle which followed. The sermon parodied in verse the pulpit discourses of the time, with text duly announced, the customary scholastic divisions, and an incredible licence in matter and in phrase. Among the dramatic monologues of the fifteenth century is found at least one little masterpiece, which has been ascribed on insufficient grounds to Villon, and which would do no discredit to that poet's genius—the *Franc-Archer de Bagnolet*. The francs-archers of Charles VII.—a rural militia—were not beloved of the people; the *miles*

gloriosus of Bagnolet village, boasting largely of his valour, encounters a stuffed scarecrow, twisting to the wind ; his alarms, humiliations, and final triumph are rendered in a monologue which expounds the action of the piece with admirable spirit.

If the Mystery served to fill the void left by the national epopee, the farce may be regarded as to some extent the dramatic inheritor of the spirit of the fabliau. It aims at mirth and laughter for their own sakes, without any purpose of edification ; it had, like the fabliau, the merit of brevity, and not infrequently the fault of unabashed grossness. But the very fact that it was a thing of little consequence allowed the farce to exhibit at times an audacity of political or ecclesiastical criticism which transformed it into a dramatised pamphlet. In general it chose its matter from the ludicrous misadventures of private life : the priest, the monk, the husband, the mother-in-law, the wife, the lover, the roguish servant are the agents in broadly ludicrous intrigues ; the young wife lords it over her dotard husband, and makes mockery of his presumptive heirs, in *La Cornette* of Jean d'Abondance ; in *Le Cuvier*, the husband, whose many household duties have been scheduled, has his revenge —the list, which he deliberately recites while his wife flounders helpless in the great washing-tub, does not include the task of effecting her deliverance.

Amid much that is trivial and much that is indecent, one farce stands out pre-eminent, and may indeed be called a comedy of manners and of character—the merry misfortunes of that learned advocate, *Maître Pierre Pathelin*. The date is doubtless about 1470 ; the author, probably a Parisian and a member of the Basoche, is unknown. With all his toiling and cheat-

ing, Pathelin is poor ; with infinite art and spirit he beguiles the draper of the cloth which will make himself a coat and his faithful Guillemette a gown ; when the draper, losing no time, comes for his money and an added dinner of roast goose, behold Maître Pathelin is in a raging fever, raving in every dialect. Was the purchase of his cloth a dream, or work of the devil ? To add to the worthy tradesman's ill-luck, his shepherd has stolen his wool and eaten his sheep. The dying Pathelin unexpectedly appears in court to defend the accused, and having previously advised his client to affect idiocy and reply to all questions with the senseless utterance *bée*, he triumphantly wins the case ; but the tables are turned when Master Pathelin demands his fee, and can obtain no other response than *bée* from the instructed shepherd. The triumph of rogue over rogue is the only moral of the piece ; it is a satire on fair dealing and justice, and, though the morals of a farce are not to be gravely insisted on, such morals as *Maître Pathelin* presents agree well with the spirit of the age which first enjoyed this masterpiece of caricature.

The actors in mediæval comedy, as in the serious drama, were amateurs. The members of the academic *puys* were succeeded by the members of guilds, or *confréries*, or *sociétés joyeuses*. Of these societies the most celebrated was that of the Parisian *Enfants sans Souci*. With this were closely associated the Basochiens, the corporation of clerks to the *procureurs* of the Parlement of Paris.[1] It may be that the *sots* of the capital were only members of the *basoche*, assuming for the occasion the

[1] This corporation, known as the *Royaume de la Basoche* (*basilica*), was probably as old as the fourteenth century

motley garb. In colleges, scholars performed at first in Latin plays, but from the fifteenth century in French. At the same time, troupes of performers occasionally moved from city to city, exhibiting a Mystery, but they did not hold together when the occasion had passed. Professional comedians were brought from Italy to Lyons in 1548, for the entertainment of Henri II. and Catherine de Médicis. From that date companies of French actors appear to become numerous. New species of the drama — tragedy, comedy, pastoral — replace the mediæval forms; but much of the genius of French classical comedy is a development from the Morality, the *sottie*, and the farce. To present these newer forms the service of trained actors was required. During the last quarter of the sixteenth century the amateur performers of the ancient drama finally disappear.

BOOK THE SECOND

THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

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CHAPTER I

RENAISSANCE AND REFORMATION

THE literature of the sixteenth century is dominated by two chief influences—that of the Renaissance and that of the Reformation. When French armies under Charles VIII. and Louis XII. made a descent on Italy, they found everywhere a recognition of the importance of art, an enthusiasm for beauty, a feeling for the æsthetic as well as the scholarly aspects of antiquity, a new joy in life, an universal curiosity, a new confidence in human reason. To Latin culture a Greek culture had been added; and side by side with the mediæval master of the understanding, Aristotle, the master of the imaginative reason, Plato, was held in honour. Before the first quarter of the sixteenth century closed, France had received a great gift from Italy, which profoundly modified, but by no means effaced, the characteristics of her national genius. The Reformation was a recovery of Christian antiquity and of Hebraism, and for a time the religious movement made common cause with the

Renaissance; but the grave morals, the opposition of grace to nature, and the dogmatic spirit of theology after a time alienated the Reforming party from the mere humanism of literature and art. An interest in general ideas and a capacity for dealing with them were fostered by the study of antiquity both classical and Christian, by the meeting of various tendencies, and by the conflict of rival creeds. To embody general ideas in art under a presiding feeling for beauty, to harmonise thought and form, was the great work of the seventeenth century; but before this could be effected it was necessary that France should enjoy tranquillity after the strife of the civil wars.

Learning had received the distinction of court patronage when Louis XII. appointed the great scholar Budé his secretary. Around Francis I., although he was himself rather a lover of the splendour and ornament of the Renaissance than of its finer spirit, men of learning and poets gathered. On the suggestion of GUILLAUME BUDÉ he endowed professorships of Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, to which were added those of medicine, mathematics, and philosophy (1530–40), and in this projected foundation of the Collège de France an important step was made towards the secularisation of learned studies. The King's sister, MARGUERITE OF NAVARRE (1492–1549), perhaps the most accomplished woman of her time, represents more admirably than Francis the genius of the age. She studied Latin, Italian, Spanish, German, Hebrew, and, when forty, occupied herself with Greek. Her heart was ardent as well as her intellect; she was gay and mundane, and at the same time she was serious (with even a strain of mystical emotion) in her concern for religion.

Although not in communion with the Reformers, she sympathised with them, and extended a generous protection to those who incurred danger through their liberal opinions. Her poems, *Marguerites de la Marguerite des Princesses* (1547), show the mediæval influences forming a junction with those of the Renaissance. Some are religious, but side by side with her four dramatic Mysteries and her eloquent *Triomphe de l'Agneau* appears the *Histoire des Satyres et Nymphes de Diane*, imitated from the Italian of Sannazaro. Among her latest poems, which remained in manuscript until 1896, are a pastoral dramatic piece expressing her grief for the death of her brother Francis I.; a second dramatic poem, *Comédie jouée au Mont de Marsan*, in which love (human or divine) triumphs over the spirit of the world, over superstitious asceticism, and over the wiser temper of religious moderation. *Les Prisons* tells in allegory of her servitude to passion, to worldly ambition, and to the desire for human knowledge, until at last the divine love brought her deliverance. The union of the mundane and the moral spirit is singularly shown in Marguerite's collection of prose tales, written in imitation of Boccaccio, the *Heptaméron des Nouvelles* (1558).

These tales were not an indiscretion of youth; probably Marguerite composed them a few years before her death; perhaps their licence and wanton mirth were meant to enliven the melancholy hours of her beloved brother; certainly the writer is ingenious in extracting edifying lessons from narratives which do not promise edification. They are not so gross as other writings of the time, and this is Marguerite's true defence; to laugh at the immoralities of monks and priests was a tradition in literature which neither the spirit of the Renaissance

nor that of the Reformation condemned. A company of ladies and gentlemen, detained by floods on their return from the Pyrenean baths, beguile the time by telling these tales, and the pious widow Dame Oisille gives excellent assistance in showing how they tend to a moral purpose. The series, designed to equal in number the tales of the Decameron, is incomplete. Possibly Marguerite was aided by some one or more of the authors of whom she was the patroness and protector; but no sufficient evidence exists for the ascription of the *Heptaméron* to Bonaventure des Périers.

Among the poets whom Marguerite received with favour at her court was CLÉMENT MAROT, the versifier, as characterised by Boileau, of "elegant badinage." His predecessors and early contemporaries in the opening years of the sixteenth century continued the manner of the so-called *rhétoriqueurs*, who endeavoured to maintain allegory, now decrepit or effete, with the aid of ingenuities of versification and pedantry of diction; or else they carried on something of the more living tradition of Villon or of Coquillard. Among the former, Jean le Maire de Belges deserves to be remembered less for his verse than for his prose work, *Illustrations de Gaule et Singularitez de Troie*, in which the Trojan origin of the French people is set forth with some feeling for beauty and a mass of crude erudition. Clément Marot, born at Cahors in 1495 or 1496, a poet's son, was for a time in the service of Francis I. as *valet de chambre*, and accompanied his master to the battle of Pavia, where he was wounded and made prisoner. Pursued by the Catholics as a heretic, and afterwards by the Genevan Calvinists as a libertine, he was protected as long as was possible by the King

and by his sister. He died at Turin, a refugee to Italy, in 1544.

In his literary origins Marot belongs to the Middle Ages; he edited the *Roman de la Rose* and the works of Villon; his immediate masters were the *grands rhétoriqueurs;* but the spirit of the Renaissance and his own genius delivered him from the oppression of their authority, and his intellect was attracted by the revolt and the promise of freedom found in the Reforming party. A light and pleasure-loving nature, a temper which made the prudent conduct of life impossible, exposed him to risks, over which, aided by protectors whom he knew how to flatter with a delicate grace, he glided without fatal mishap. He did not bring to poetry depth of passion or solidity of thought; he brought what was needed—a bright intelligence, a sense of measure and proportion, grace, gaiety, *esprit.* Escaping, after his early *Temple de Cupido*, from the allegorising style, he learned to express his personal sentiments, and something of the gay, bourgeois spirit of France, with aristocratic distinction. His poetry of the court and of occasion has lost its savour; but when he writes familiarly (as in the *Épître au Roi pour avoir été derobé*), or tells a short tale (like the fable of the rat and the lion), he is charmingly bright and natural. None of his poems—elegies, epistles, satires, songs, epigrams, rondeaux, pastorals, ballades—overwhelm us by their length; he was not a writer of vast imaginative ambitions. His best epigrams are masterpieces in their kind, with happy turns of thought and expression in which art seems to have the ease of nature. The satirical epistle supposed to be sent, not by Marot, but by his valet, to Marot's adversary, Sagon, is spirited in its

insolence. *L'Enfer* is a satiric outbreak of indignation suggested by his imprisonment in the Châtelet on the charge of heresy. His versified translation of forty-nine Psalms added to his glory, and brought him the honour of personal danger from the hostility of the Sorbonne; but to attempt such a translation is to aim at what is impossible. His gift to French poetry is especially a gift of finer art—firm and delicate expression, felicity in rendering a thought or a feeling, certainty and grace in poetic evolution, skill in handling the decasyllabic line. A great poet Marot was not, and could not be; but, coming at a fortunate moment, his work served literature in important ways; it was a return from laboured rhetoric to nature. In the classical age his merit was recognised by La Bruyère, and the author of the *Fables* and the *Contes*—in some respects a kindred spirit—acknowledged a debt to Marot.

From Marot as a poet much was learned by Marguerite of Navarre. Of his contemporaries, who were also disciples, the most distinguished was MELIN DE SAINT-GELAIS, and on the master's death Melin passed for an eminent poet. We can regard him now more justly, as one who in slender work sought for elegance, and fell into a mannered prettiness. While preserving something of the French spirit, he suffered from the frigid ingenuities which an imitation of Italian models suggested to him; but it cannot be forgotten that Saint-Gelais brought the sonnet from Italy into French poetry. The school of Marot, ambitious in little things, affected much the *blason*, which celebrates an eyebrow, a lip, a bosom, a jewel, a flower, a precious stone; lyrical inspiration was slender, but clearness and grace were worth attaining, and the conception of poetry as a fine art

served to lead the way towards Ronsard and the Pléiade.

The most powerful personality in literature of the first half of the sixteenth century was not a poet, though he wrote verses, but a great creator in imaginative prose, great partly by virtue of his native genius, partly because the sap of the new age of enthusiasm for science and learning was thronging in his veins—FRANÇOIS RABELAIS. Born about 1490 or 1495, at Chinon, in Touraine, of parents in a modest station, he received his education in the village of Seuillé and at the convent of La Baumette. He revolted against the routine of the schools, and longed for some nutriment more succulent and savoury. For fifteen years he lived as a Franciscan monk in the cell and cloisters of the monastery at Fontenay-le-Comte. In books, but not those of a monastic library, he found salvation; mathematics, astronomy, law, Latin, Greek consoled him during his period of uncongenial seclusion. His criminal companions—books which might be suspected of heresy—were sequestrated. The young Bishop of Maillezais—his friend Geoffroy d'Estissac, who had aided his studies—and the great scholar Budé came to his rescue, and passing first, by favour of the Pope, to the Benedictine abbey of Maillezais, before long he quitted the cloister, and, as a secular priest, began his wanderings of a scholar in search of universal knowledge. In 1530–31 he was at Montpellier, studying medicine and lecturing on medical works of Hippocrates and Galen; next year, at Lyons, one of the learned group gathered around the great printers of that city, he practised his art of physic in the public hospital, and was known as a scientific author. Towards the close of 1532 he re-edited the popular romance *Chroniques Gar-*

gantuines, which tells the adventures of the "enormous giant Gargantua." It was eagerly read, and brought laughter to the lips of Master Rabelais' patients. Learning, he held, was good, but few things in this world are wholesomer than laughter. The success of the *Chroniques* seems to have moved him to write a continuation, and in 1533 appeared *Pantagruel*, the story of the deeds and prowess of Gargantua's giant son, newly composed by Alcofribas Nasier, an anagram which concealed the name of François Rabelais. It forms the second of the five books which make up its author's famous work. A recast or rather a new creation of the Chronicles of Gargantua, replacing the original *Chroniques*, followed in 1535. It was not until 1546 and 1552 that the second and—in its complete form—the third books of *Pantagruel* appeared, and the authorship was acknowledged. The last book was posthumous (1562 in part, 1564 in full), and the inferiority of style, together with the more bitter spirit of its satire, have led many critics to the opinion that it is only in part from the hand of the great and wise humourist.

Rabelais was in Rome in 1534, and again in 1535, as physician to the French ambassador, Jean du Bellay, Bishop of Paris. He pursued his scientific studies in medicine and botany, took lessons in Arabic, and had all a savant's intelligent curiosity for the remains of antiquity. Some years of his life were passed in wandering from one French university to another. Fearing the hostility of the Sorbonne, during the last illness of his protector Francis I., he fled to the imperial city of Metz. He was once again in Rome with Cardinal du Bellay, in 1549. Next year the author of *Pantagruel* was appointed curé of Meudon, near Paris, but, perhaps

as a concession to public opinion, he resigned his clerical charges on the eve of the publication of his fourth book. Rabelais died probably in 1552 or 1553, aged about sixty years.

On his death it might well have been said that the gaiety of nations was eclipsed; but to his contemporaries Rabelais appeared less as the enormous humourist, the buffoon Homer, than as a great scholar and man of science, whose bright temper and mirthful conversation were in no way inconsistent with good sense, sound judgment, and even a habit of moderation. It is thus that he should still be regarded. Below his laughter lay wisdom; below his orgy of grossness lay a noble ideality; below the extravagances of his imagination lay the equilibrium of a spirit sane and strong. The life that was in him was so abounding and exultant that it broke all dikes and dams; and laughter for him needed no justification, it was a part of this abounding life. After the mediæval asceticism and the intellectual bondage of scholasticism, life in Rabelais has its vast outbreak and explosion; he would be no fragment of humanity, but a complete man. He would enjoy the world to the full, and yet at the same time there is something of stoicism in his philosophy of life; while gaily accepting the good things of the earth, he would hold himself detached from the gifts of fortune, and possess his soul in a strenuous sanity. Let us return—such is his teaching—to nature, honouring the body, but giving higher honour to the intellect and to the moral feeling; let us take life seriously, and therefore gaily; let us face death cheerfully, knowing that we do not wholly die; with light in the understanding and love in the heart, we can confront all dangers and defy all doubts.

He is the creator of characters which are types. His giants—Grandgousier, Gargantua, Pantagruel—are giants of good sense and large benevolence. The education of Pantagruel presents the ideal pedagogy of the Renaissance, an education of the whole man—mind and body—in contrast with the dwarfing subtleties and word-spinning of the effete mediæval schools. Friar John is the monk whose passion for a life of activity cannot be restrained; his violence is the overflow of wholesome energy. It is to his care that the Abbey of Thelema is confided, where young men and maidens are to be occupied with every noble toil and every high delight, an abbey whose rule has but a single clause (since goodness has no rule save freedom), "Do what you will." Of such a fraternity, love and marriage are the happiest outcome. Panurge, for whom the suggestion was derived from the macaronic poet Folengo, is the fellow of Shakespeare's Falstaff, in his lack of morals, his egoism, his inexhaustible wit; he is the worst and best of company. We would dispense with such a disreputable associate if we could, but save that he is a "very wicked lewd rogue," he is "the most virtuous man in the world," and we cannot part with him. Panurge would marry, but fears lest he may be the victim of a faithless wife; every mode of divination, every source of prediction except one is resorted to, and still his fate hangs threatening; it only remains to consult the oracle of La Dive Bouteille. The voyaging quest is long and perilous; in each island at which the adventurers touch, some social or ecclesiastical abuse is exhibited for ridicule; the word of the oracle is in the end the mysterious "Drink"—drink, that is, if one may venture to interpret an oracle, of the pure water

of wisdom and knowledge, and let the unknown future rest.

The obscenity and ordure of Rabelais were to the taste of his time; his severer censures of Church and State were disguised by his buffoonery; flinging out his good sense and wise counsels with a liberal hand, he also wields vigorously the dunghill pitchfork. If he is gross beyond what can be described, he is not, apart from the evil of such grossness, a corrupter of morals, unless morals be corrupted by a belief in the goodness of the natural man. The graver wrongs of his age—wars of ambition, the abuse of public justice, the hypocrisies, cruelties, and lethargy of the ecclesiastics, distrust of the intellectual movement, spurious ideals of life—are vigorously condemned. Rabelais loves goodness, charity, truth; he pleads for the right of manhood to a full and free development of all its powers; and if questions of original sin and divine grace trouble him little, and his creed has some of the hardihood of the Renaissance, he is full of filial gratitude to *le bon Dieu* for His gift of life, and of a world in which to live strongly should be to live joyously.

The influence of Rabelais is seen in the writers of prose tales who were his contemporaries and successors; but they want his broad good sense and real temperance. BONAVENTURE DES PÉRIERS, whom Marguerite of Navarre favoured, and whose *Nouvelles Récréations*, with more of the tradition of the French fabliaux and farces and less of the Italian manner, have something in common with the stories of the *Heptaméron*, died in desperation by his own hand about 1543. His Lucianic dialogues which compose the *Cymbalum Mundi* show the audacity of scepticism which the new ideas of the

Renaissance engendered in ill-balanced spirits. With all his boldness and ardour Rabelais exercised a certain discretion, and in revising his own text clearly exhibited a desire to temper valour with prudence.

It is remarkable that just at the time when Rabelais published the second and best book of his *Pantagruel*, in which the ideality and the realism of the Renaissance blossom to the full, there was a certain revival of the chivalric romance. The Spanish *Amadis des Gaules* (1540–48), translated by Herberay des Essarts, was a distant echo of the Romances of the Round Table. The gallant achievements of courtly knights, their mystical and platonic loves, were a delight to Francis I., and charmed a whole generation. Thus, for the first time, the literature of Spain reached France, and the influence of *Amadis* reappears in the seventeenth century in the romances of d'Urfé and Mdlle. de Scudéry.

If the genius of the Renaissance is expressed ardently and amply in the writings of Rabelais, the genius of the Reformation finds its highest and most characteristic utterance through one whom Rabelais describes as the "demoniacle" of Geneva—JEAN CALVIN (1509–64). The pale face and attenuated figure of the great Reformer, whose life was a long disease, yet whose indomitable will sustained him amid bodily infirmities, present a striking contrast to the sanguine health and overflowing animal spirits of the good physician who reckoned laughter among the means of grace. Yet Calvin was not merely a Reformer: he was also a humanist, who, in his own way, made a profound study of man, and who applied the learning of a master to the determination of dogma. His education was partly theological, partly legal; and in his body of doctrine appear some of the

rigour, the severity, and the formal procedures of the law. Indignation against the imprisonment and burning of Protestants, under the pretence that they were rebellious anabaptists, drew him from obscurity; silence, he thought, was treason. He addressed to the King an eloquent letter, in which he maintained that the Reformed faith was neither new nor tending towards schism, and next year (1536) he published his lucid and logical exposition of Protestant doctrine — the *Christianæ Religionis Institutio.* It placed him, at the age of twenty-seven, as leader in the forefront of the new religious movement.

But the movement was not merely learned, it was popular, and Calvin was resolved to present his work to French readers in their own tongue. His translation—the *Institution*—appeared probably in 1541. Perhaps no work by an author of seven-and-twenty had ever so great an influence. It consists of four books—of God, of Jesus as a Mediator, of the effects of His mediatorial work, and of the exterior forms of the Church. The generous illusion of Rabelais, that human nature is essentially good, has no place in Calvin's system. Man is fallen and condemned under the law; all his righteousness is as filthy rags; God, of His mere good pleasure, from all eternity predestinated some men to eternal life and others to eternal death; the Son of God came to earth to redeem the elect; through the operation of the Holy Spirit in the gift of faith they are united to Christ, are justified through His righteousness imputed to them, and are sanctified in their hearts; the Church is the body of the faithful in every land; the officers of the Church are chosen by the people; the sacraments are two—baptism and the Lord's Supper. In his spirit of

system, his clearness, and the logical enchainment of his ideas, Calvin is eminently French. On the one side he saw the Church of Rome, with—as he held—its human tradition, its mass of human superstitions, intervening between the soul and God; on the other side were the scepticism, the worldliness, the religious indifference of the Renaissance. Within the Reforming party there was the conflict of private opinions. Calvin desired to establish once for all, on the basis of the Scriptures, a coherent system of dogma which should impose itself upon the minds of men as of divine authority, which should be at once a barrier against the dangers of superstition and the dangers of libertine speculation As the leaders of the French Revolution propounded political constitutions founded on the idea of the rights of man, so Calvin aimed at setting forth a creed proceeding, if we may so put it, from a conception of the absolute rights of God. Through the mere good pleasure of our Creator, Ruler, Judge, we are what we are.

It is not perhaps too much to say that Calvin is the greatest writer of the sixteenth century. He learned much from the prose of Latin antiquity. Clearness, precision, ordonnance, sobriety, intellectual energy are compensations for his lack of grace, imagination, sensibility, and religious unction. He wrote to convince, to impress his ideas upon other minds, and his austere purpose was attained. In the days of the pagan Renaissance, it was well for France that there should also be a Renaissance of moral rigour; if freedom was needful, so also was discipline. On the other hand, it may be admitted that Calvin's reason is sometimes the dupe of Calvin's reasoning.

His *Life* was written in French by his fellow-worker in the Reformation, Théodore de Bèze, who also recorded the history of the Reformed Churches in France (1580). Bèze and Viret, together with their leader Calvin, were eminent in pulpit exposition and exhortation, and in Bèze the preacher was conjoined with a poet. At Calvin's request he undertook his translation of the Psalms, to complete that by Marot, and in 1551 his sacred drama the *Tragédie Française du sacrifice d'Abraham*, designed to inculcate the duty of entire surrender to the divine will, and written with a grave and restrained ardour, was presented at the University of Lausanne.

CHAPTER II

FROM THE PLÉIADE TO MONTAIGNE

The classical Renaissance was not necessarily opposed to high ethical ideals; it was not wholly an affair of the sensuous imagination; it brought with it the conception of Roman virtue, and this might well unite itself (as we see afterwards in Corneille) with Christian faith. Among the many translations of the sixteenth century was Montaigne's early friend—the friend in memory of all his life—Étienne de la Boétie (1530–63). It is not, however, for his fragments of Plutarch or his graceful rendering of Xenophon's Economics (praised by him the Montaigne) that we remember La Boétie; it is rather for his eloquent pleading on behalf of freedom in the *Discours de la Servitude Volontaire ou Contr'un*, written at sixteen—revised later—in which, with the rhetoric of youth, he utters his invective against tyranny. Before La Boétie's premature death the annals of antiquity as seen in action had been published to French readers in the pages of Amyot's delightful translation of Plutarch's Lives (1559), to be followed, some years later, by his *Œuvres Morales et Meslanges*. Jacques Amyot (1513–93), from an illiterate, ragged boy, rose to be the Bishop of Auxerre. His scholarship, seen not only in his Plutarch, but in his rendering of the *Daphnis et Chloé* of Longus, and other works was exquisite; but still

more admirable was his sense of the capacities of French prose. He divined with a rare instinct the genius of the language; he felt the affinities between his Greek original and the idioms of his own countrymen; he rather re-created than translated Plutarch. "We dunces," wrote Montaigne, "would have been lost, had not this book raised us from the mire; thanks to it, we now venture to speak and write; . . . it is our breviary." The life and the ideas of the ancient world became the possession, not of scholars only, but of all French readers. The book was a school of manners and of thought, an inspirer of heroic deeds. "To love Plutarch," said the greatest Frenchman of the century, Henry of Navarre, "is to love me, for he was long the master of my youth."

It was such an interest in the life and ideas of antiquity as Amyot conveyed to the general mind of France that was wanting to Ronsard and the group of poets surrounding him. Their work was concerned primarily with literary form; of the life of the world and general ideas, apart from form, they took too little heed. The transition from Marot to Ronsard is to be traced chiefly through the school of Lyons. In that city of the South, letters flourished side by side with industry and commerce; Maurice Scève celebrated his mistress Délie, "object of the highest virtue," with Petrarchan ingenuities; and his pupil LOUISE LABÉ, "la belle Cordière," sang in her sonnets of a true passion felt, as she declares, "en ses os, en son sang, en son âme." The Lyonese poets, though imbued with Platonic ideas, rather carry on the tradition of Marot than announce the Pléiade. PIERRE DE RONSARD, born at a château a few leagues from Vendôme, in the year 1524, was in the service of

the sons of Francis I. as page, was in Scotland with James V., and later had the prospect of a distinguished diplomatic career, when deafness, consequent on a serious malady, closed for him the avenue to public life. He threw himself ardently into the study of letters; in company with the boy Antoine de Baïf he received lessons from an excellent Hellenist, Jean Daurat, soon to be principal of the Collège Coqueret. At the College a group of students — Ronsard, Baïf, Joachim du Bellay, Remi Belleau — gathered about the master. The "Brigade" was formed, which, by-and-by, with the addition of Jodelle and Pontus de Thyard, and including Daurat, became the constellation of the Pléiade. The seven associates read together, translated and imitated the classics; a common doctrine of art banded them in unity; they thought scorn of the vulgar ways of popular verse; poetry for them was an arduous and exquisite toil; its service was a religion. At length, in 1549, they flung out their manifesto — the *Défense et Illustration de la Langue Française* by Du Bellay, the most important study in literary criticism of the century. With this should be considered, as less important manifestoes, the later *Art Poétique* of Ronsard, and his prefaces to the *Franciade*. To formulate principles is not always to the advantage of a movement in literature; but champions need a banner, reformers can hardly dispense with a definite creed. Against the popular conception of the ignorant the Pléiade maintained that poetry was a high and difficult form of art; against the pedantry of humanism they maintained that the native tongue of France admitted of literary art worthy to take its place beside that of Greece or Rome. The French literary vocabulary, they

declared, has excellences of its own, but it needs to be enriched by technical terms, by words of local dialects, by prudent adoptions from Greek and Latin, by judicious developments of the existing families of words, by the recovery of words that have fallen into disuse.

It is unjust to the Pléiade to say that they aimed at overloading poetic diction with neologisms of classical origin; they sought to innovate with discretion; but they unquestionably aimed at the formation of a poetic diction distinct from that of prose; they turned away from simplicity of speech to ingenious periphrasis; they desired a select, aristocratic idiom for the service of verse; they recommended a special syntax in imitation of the Latin; for the elder forms of French poetry they would substitute reproductions or re-creations of classical forms. Rondeaux, ballades, virelais, chants royaux, chansons are to be cast aside as *épiceries;* and their place is to be taken by odes like those of Pindar or of Horace, by the elegy, satire, epigram, epic, or by newer forms justified by the practice of Italian masters. Rich but not over-curious rhymes are to be cultivated, with in general the alternation of masculine and feminine rhymes; the cæsura is to fall in accordance with the meaning. Ronsard, more liberal than Du Bellay, permits, on the ground of classical example, the gliding from couplet to couplet without a pause. "The alexandrine holds in our language the place of heroic verse among the Greeks and Romans"—in this statement is indicated the chief service rendered to French poetry by Ronsard and the rest of the Pléiade; they it was who, by their teaching and example, imposed on later writers that majestic line, possessing the most

varied powers, capable of the finest achievements, which has yielded itself alike to the purposes of Racine and to those of Victor Hugo.

Ronsard and Du Bellay broke with the tradition of the Middle Ages, and inaugurated the French classical school; it remained for Malherbe, at a later date, to reform the reformation of the Pléiade, and to win for himself the glory which properly belongs to his predecessors. Unfortunately from its origin the French classical school had in it the spirit of an intellectual aristocracy, which removed it from popular sympathies; unfortunately, also, the poets of the Pléiade failed to perceive that the masterpieces of Greece and Rome are admirable, not because they belong to antiquity, but because they are founded on the imitation of nature and on ideas of the reason. They were regarded as authorities equal with nature or independent of it; and thus while the school of Ronsard did much to renew literary art, its teaching involved an error which eventually tended to the sterilisation of art. That error found its correction in the literature of the seventeenth century, and expressly in the doctrine set forth by Boileau; yet under the correction some of the consequences of the error remained. Ronsard and his followers, on the other hand, never made the assumption, common enough in the seventeenth century, that poetry could be manufactured by observance of the rules, nor did they suppose that the total play of emotion must be rationalised by the understanding; they left a place for the instinctive movements of poetic sensibility.

During forty years Ronsard remained the "Prince of Poets." Tasso sought his advice; the Chancellor Michel

de l'Hospital wrote in his praise; Brantôme placed him above Petrarch; Queen Elizabeth and Mary Stuart sent him gifts; Charles IX. on one occasion invited him to sit beside the throne. In his last hours he was still occupied with his art. His death, at the close of 1585, was felt as a national calamity, and pompous honours were awarded to his tomb. Yet Ronsard, though ambitious of literary distinction, did not lose his true self in a noisy fame. His was the delicate nature of an artist; his deafness perhaps added to his timidity and his love of retirement; we think of him in his garden, cultivating his roses as "the priest of Flora."

His work as a poet falls into four periods. From 1550 to 1554 he was a humanist without discretion or reserve. In the first three books of the *Odes* he attempted to rival Pindar; in the *Amours de Cassandre* he emulates the glory of Petrarch. From 1554 to 1560, abandoning his Pindarism, he was in discipleship to Anacreon[1] and Horace. It is the period of the less ambitious odes found in the fourth and fifth books, the period of the *Amours de Marie* and the *Hymnes*. From 1560 to 1574 he was a poet of the court and of courtly occasions, an eloquent declaimer on public events in the *Discours des Misères de ce Temps*, and the unfortunate epic poet of his unfinished *Franciade*. During the last ten years of his life he gave freer expression to his personal feelings, his sadness, his gladness; and to these years belong the admirable sonnets to Hélène de Surgères, his autumnal love.

Ronsard's genius was lyrical and elegiac, but the tendencies of a time when the great affair was the organisation

[1] *i.e.* the Anacreontic poems, found, and published in 1554, by Henri Estienne.

of social life, and as a consequence the limitation of individual and personal passions, were not favourable to the development of lyrical poetry. In his imitations of Pindar a narrative element checks the flight of song, and there is a certain unreality in the premeditated attempt to reproduce the passionate fluctuations and supposed disorder of his model. The study of Pindar, however, trained Ronsard in the handling of sustained periods of verse, and interested him in complex lyrical combinations. His Anacreontic and Horatian odes are far happier; among these some of his most delightful work is found. If he was deficient in great ideas, he had delicacy of sentiment and an exquisite sense of metrical harmony. The power which he possessed as a narrative poet appears best in episodes or epic fragments. His ambitious attempt to trace the origin of the French monarchy from the imaginary Trojan Francus was unfortunate in its subject, and equally unfortunate in its form — the rhyming decasyllabic verse.

In pieces which may be called hortatory, the pulpit eloquence, as it were, of a poet addressing his contemporaries on public matters, the utterances of a patriot and a citizen moved by pity for his fellows, such poetry as the *Discours des Misères de ce Temps* and the *Institution pour l'Adolescence du Roi, Charles IX.*, Ronsard is original and impressive, a forerunner of the orator poets of the seventeenth century. His eclogues show a true feeling for external nature, touched at times by a tender sadness. When he escapes from the curiosities and the strain of his less happy Petrarchism, he is an admirable poet of love in song and sonnet; no more beautiful variation on the theme of "gather the rosebuds while ye may" exists

than his sonnet *Quand vous serez bien vieille*, unless it be his dainty ode *Mignonne, allons voir si la Rose*. Passionate in the deepest and largest sense Ronsard is not; but it was much to be sincere and tender, to observe just measure, to render a subtle phase of emotion. In the fine melancholy of his elegiac poetry he is almost modern. Before all else he is a master of his instrument, an inventor of new effects and movements of the lyre; in his hands the entire rhythmical system was renewed or was purified. His dexterity in various metres was that of a great virtuoso, and it was not the mere dexterity which conquers difficulties, it was a skill inspired and sustained by the sentiment of metre.

Of the other members of the Pléiade, one—Jodelle—is remembered chiefly in connection with the history of the drama. Baïf (1532–89), son of the French ambassador at Venice, translated from Sophocles and Terence, imitated Plautus, Petrarchised in sonnets, took from Virgil's Georgics the inspiration of his *Météores*, was guided by the Anacreontic poems in his *Passe-Temps*, and would fain rival Theognis in his most original work *Les Mimes*, where a moral or satiric meaning masks behind an allegory or a fable. He desired to connect poetry more closely with music, and with this end in view thought to reform the spelling of words and to revive the quantitative metrical system of classical verse.[1] Remi Belleau (1528–77) practised the Horatian ode and the sonnet; translated Anacreon; followed the Neapolitan Sannazaro in his *Bergerie* of connected prose and verse, where the shepherds are persons of distinction arrayed in a pastoral disguise;

[1] The "*Baïfin* verse," French not classical, is of fifteen syllables, divided into hemistichs of seven and eight syllables.

and adapted the mediæval *lapidary* (with imitations of the pseudo-Orpheus) to the taste of the Renaissance in his *Amours et Nouveaux Échanges des Pierres Précieuses.* These little myths and metamorphoses of gems are ingenious and graceful. The delicate feeling for nature which Belleau possessed is seen at its best in the charming song *Avril,* included in his somewhat incoherent *Bergerie.* Among his papers was found, after his death, a comedy, *La Reconnue,* which, if it has little dramatic power, shows a certain instinct for satire.

These are minor lights in the poetical constellation; but the star of JOACHIM DU BELLAY shines with a ray which, if less brilliant than that of Ronsard, has a finer and more penetrating influence. Du Bellay was born about 1525, at Liré, near Angers, of an illustrious family. His youth was unhappy, and a plaintive melancholy haunts his verse. Like Ronsard he suffered from deafness, and he has humorously sung its praises. *Olive,* fifty sonnets in honour of his Platonic or Petrarchan mistress, Mlle. de Viole (the letters of whose name are transposed to Olive), appeared almost at the same moment as the earliest *Odes* of Ronsard; but before long he could mock in sprightly stanzas the fantasies and excesses of the Petrarchan style. It was not until his residence in Rome (1551) as intendant of his cousin Cardinal du Bellay, the French ambassador, that he found his real self. In his *Antiquités de Rome* he expresses the sentiment of ruins, the pathos of fallen greatness, as it had never been expressed before. The intrigues, corruption, and cynicism of Roman society, his broken health, an unfortunate passion for the Faustina of his Latin verses, and the longing for his beloved

province and little Liré depressed his spirits; in the sonnets of his *Regrets* he embodied his intimate feelings, and that lively spirit of satire which the baseness of the Pontifical court summoned into life. This satiric vein had, indeed, already shown itself in his mocking counsel to *le Poète courtisan:* the courtier poet is to be a gentleman who writes at ease; he is not to trouble himself with study of the ancients; he is to produce only pieces of occasion, and these in a negligent style; the rarer and the smaller they are the better; and happily at last he may cease to bring forth even these. Possibly his *poète courtisan* was Melin de Saint-Gelais. As a rural poet Du Bellay is charming; his *Jeux Rustiques*, while owing much to the *Lusus* of the Venetian poet Navagero, have in them the true breath of the fields; it is his *douce* province of Anjou which inspires him; the song to *Vénus* in its happiest stanzas is only less admirable than the *Vanneur de Blé*, with which more than any other single poem the memory of Du Bellay is associated. The personal note, which is in general absent from the poetry of Ronsard, is poignantly and exquisitely audible in the best pieces of Du Bellay. He did not live long enough to witness the complete triumph of the master; in 1560 he died exhausted, at the age of thirty-five.

The Pléiade served literature by their attention to form, by their skill in poetic instrumentation; but they were incapable of interpreting life in any large and original way. In the hands of their successors poetry languished for want of an inspiring theme. PHILIPPE DESPORTES (1546–1606) was copious and skilful in his reproduction and imitation of Italian models; as a courtier poet he reduced literary flattery to a fine art;

but his mannered graces are cold, his pretence of passion is a laboured kind of *esprit*. A copy of his works annotated by the hand of Malherbe survives; the comments, severe and just, remained unpublished, probably because the writer was unwilling to pursue an adversary whom death had removed from his way. Jean Bertaut, his disciple, is a lesser Desportes. Satire was developed by Jean Vauquelin de la Fresnaye, and to him we owe an *Art Poétique* (1575) which adapts to his own time the teaching of Aristotle and Horace. More interesting than these is JEAN PASSERAT (1534–1602), whose spirit is that of old France in its mirth and mockery, and whose more serious verse has the patriotism of French citizenship; his field was small, but he tilled his field gaily and courageously. The villanelle *J'ai perdu ma tourterelle* and the ode on May-day show Passerat's art in its happiest moments.

The way for a reform in dramatic poetry had been in some degree prepared by plays of the sixteenth century, written in Latin—the work of Buchanan, Muret, and others—by translations from Terence, Sophocles, Euripides, translations from Italian comedy, and renderings of one Spanish model, the highly-popular *Celestina* of Fernando de Rojas. The Latin plays were acted in schools. The first performance of a play in French belonging to the new tendency was that of Ronsard's translation of the Plutus of Aristophanes, in 1549, by his friends of the Collège de Coqueret. It was only by amateurs, and before a limited scholarly group of spectators, that the new classical tragedies could be presented. Gradually both tragedy and comedy came to be written solely with a view to publication in print. The mediæval drama still held the stage.

JODELLE'S *Cléopâtre* (1552), performed with enthusiasm by amateurs, was therefore a false start; it was essentially literary, and not theatrical. Greek models were crudely imitated, with a lack of almost everything that gave life and charm to the Greek drama. Seneca was more accessible than Sophocles, and his faults were easy to imitate—his moralisings, his declamatory passages, his excess of emphasis. The so-called Aristotelian dramatic canons, formulated by Scaliger in his Poetic, were rigorously applied. Unity of place is preserved in *Cléopâtre;* the time of the action is reduced to twelve hours; there are interminable monologues, choral moralities, a ghost (in Seneca's manner), a narration of the heroine's death; of action there is none, the stage stands still. If Jodelle's *Didon* has some literary merit, it has little dramatic vitality. The oratorical energy of Grévin's *Jules César*, the studies of history in *La Mort de Daire* and *La Mort d'Alexandre*, by Jacques de La Taille, do not compensate their deficiency in the qualities required by the theatre. One tragedy alone, *La Sultane*, by Gabriel Bounin (1561), amid its violences and extravagances, shows a feeling for dramatic action and scenic effect.

Could the mediæval mystery and classical tragedy be reconciled? The Protestant Reformer Bèze, in his *Sacrifice d'Abraham*, attempted something of the kind; his sacred drama is a mystery by its subject, a tragedy in the conduct of the action. Three tragedies on the life of David—one of them admirable in its rendering of the love of Michol, daughter of Saul—were published in 1556 by Loys Des-Masures: the stage arrangements are those of the mediæval drama, but the unity of time is observed, and chorus and semi-chorus respond in alter-

nate strains. No junction of dramatic systems essentially opposed proved in the end possible. When Jean de La Taille wrote on a biblical subject in his *Saül le Furieux*, a play remarkable for its impressive conception and development of the character of Saul, he composed it *selon l'art*, and in the manner of "the old tragic authors." He is uncompromising in his classical method; the mediæval drama seemed inartificial to him in the large concessions granted by the spectators to the authors and actors; he would have what passes on the stage approximate, at least, to reality; the unities were accepted not merely on the supposed authority of Aristotle, but because they were an aid in attaining verisimilitude.

The most eminent name in the history of French tragedy of the sixteenth century is that of ROBERT GARNIER (1534–90). His discipleship to Seneca was at first that of a pupil who reproduces with exaggeration his master's errors. Sensible of the want of movement in his scenes, he proceeded in later plays to accumulate action upon action without reducing the action to unity. At length, in *Les Juives* (1583), which exhibits the revolt of the Jewish King and his punishment by Nabuchodonosor, he attained something of true pity and terror, beauty of characterisation, beauty of lyrical utterance in the plaintive songs of the chorus. Garnier was assuredly a poet; but even in *Les Juives*, the best tragedy of his century, he was not a master of dramatic art. If anywhere he is in a true sense dramatic, it is in his example of the new form of tragi-comedy. *Bradamante*, derived from the *Orlando Furioso* of Ariosto, shows not only poetic imagination, but a certain feeling for the requirements of the theatre.

Comedy in the sixteenth century, dating from Jodelle's *Eugène*, is either a development of the mediæval farce, indicated in point of form by the retention of octosyllabic verse, or an importation from the drama of Italy. Certain plays of Aristophanes, of Terence, of Plautus were translated; but, in truth, classical models had little influence. Grévin, while professing originality, really follows the traditions of the farce. Jean de La Taille, in his prose comedy *Les Corrivaux*, prepared the way for the easy and natural dialogue of the comic stage. The most remarkable group of sixteenth-century comedies are those translated in prose from the Italian, with such obvious adaptations as might suit them to French readers, by PIERRE DE LARIVEY (1540 to after 1611). Of the family of the Giunti, he had gallicised his own name (*Giunti*, i.e. *Arrivés*); and the originality of his plays is of a like kind with that of his name; they served at least to establish an Italian tradition for comedy, which was not without an influence in the seventeenth century; they served to advance the art of dialogue. If any comedy of the period stands out as superior to its fellows, it is *Les Contents* (1584), by Odet de Turnèbe, a free imitation of Italian models united with something imported from the Spanish *Celestina*. Its intrigue is an Italian imbroglio; but there are lively and natural scenes, such as can but rarely be found among the predecessors of Molière. In general the comedy of the sixteenth century is wildly confused in plot, conventional in its types of character, and too often as grossly indecent as the elder farces. Before the century closed, the pastoral drama had been discovered, and received influences from both Italy and Spain; the soil was being prepared for that delicate

flower of poetry, but as yet its nurture was little understood, nor indeed can it be said to have ever taken kindly to the climate of France.

While on the one hand the tendencies of the Pléiade may be described as exotic, going forth, as they did, to capture the gifts of classical and Italian literature, on the other hand they pleaded strenuously that thus only could French literature attain its highest possibilities. In the scholarship of the time, side by side with the humanism which revived and restored the culture of Greece and Rome, was another humanism which was essentially national. The historical origins of France were studied for the first time with something of a critical spirit by CLAUDE FAUCHET in his *Antiquités Gauloises et Françoises* (1579–1601). His *Recueil de l'Origine de la Langue et Poésie Françoise*, in spite of its errors, was an effort towards French philology; and in calling attention to the trouvères and their works, Fauchet may be considered a remote master of the school of modern literary research. ESTIENNE PASQUIER (1529–1615), the jurist who maintained in a famous action the cause of the University against the Jesuits, in his *Recherches de la France* treated with learning and vigour various important points in French history—civil and ecclesiastical—language, literary history, and the foundation of universities. HENRI ESTIENNE (1531–98), who entered to the full into the intoxication of classical humanism, was patriotic in his reverence for his native tongue. In a trilogy of little treatises (1565–79), written with much spirit, he maintained that of modern languages the French has the nearest affinity to the Greek, attempted to establish its superiority to Italian, and

much more to Spanish, and mocked the contemporary fashion of Italianised French.

The study of history is supported on the one hand by such erudite research as that of Fauchet and Pasquier; on the other hand it is supported by political philosophy and speculation. To philosophy, in the wider sense of the word, the sixteenth century made no large and coherent contribution; the Platonism, Pyrrhonism, Epicureanism, Stoicism of the Renaissance met and clashed together; the rival theologies of the Roman and Reformed Churches contended in a struggle for life. PIERRE DE LA RAMÉE (1515–72) expressed the revolt of rationalism against the methods of the schoolmen and the authority of Aristotle; but he ordinarily wrote in Latin, and his *Dialectique*, the first philosophical work in the vulgar tongue, hardly falls within the province of literary history.

The philosophy of politics is represented by one great name, that of JEAN BODIN (1529–96), whose *République* may entitle him to be styled the Montesquieu of the Renaissance. In an age which tended towards the formation of great monarchies he was vigorously monarchical. The patriarchal power of the sovereign might well be thought needful, in the second half of the century, as a barrier against anarchy; but Bodin was no advocate of tyranny; he condemned slavery, and held that religious persecution can only lead to a dissolution of religious belief. A citizen is defined by Bodin as a free man under the supreme government of another; like Montesquieu, he devotes attention to the adaptation of government to the varieties of race and climate. The attempts at a general history of France in the earlier part of the sixteenth century preserved

the arid methods and unilluminated style of the mediæval chronicles;[1] in the second half of the century they imitated with little skill the models of antiquity. Histories of contemporary events in Europe were written with conscientious impartiality by Lancelot de la Popelinière, and with personal and party passion, struggling against his well-meant resolves, by Agrippa d'Aubigné. The great *Historia mei Temporis* of De Thou, faithful and austere in its record of fact, was a highly-important contribution to literature, but it is written in Latin.

With a peculiar gift for narrative, the French have been long pre-eminent as writers of memoirs, and already in the sixteenth century such personal recitals are numerous. The wars of François I. and of Henri II. gave abundant scope for the display of individual enterprise and energy; the civil wars breathed into the deeds of men an intensity of passion; the actors had much to tell, and a motive for telling it each in his own interest.

The *Commentaires* of BLAISE DE MONLUC (1502–77) are said to have been named by Henri IV. "the soldier's Bible"; the Bible is one which does not always inculcate mercy or peace. Monluc, a Gascon of honourable birth and a soldier of fortune, had the instinct of battle in his blood; from a soldier he rose through every rank to be the King's lieutenant of Guyenne and a Marshal of France; during fifty years he fought, as a daring captain rather than as a great general, amorous of danger, and at length, terribly

[1] The narrative of the life of Bayard, by his secretary, writing under the name of "Le Loyal Serviteur" (1527), is admirable for its clearness, grace, and simplicity.

disfigured by wounds, he sat down, not to rest, but to wield his pen as if it were a sword of steel. His *Commentaires* were meant to be a manual for hardy combatants, and what model could he set before the young aspirant so animating as himself? In his earlier wars against the foreign foes of his country, Monluc was indeed a model of military prowess; the civil wars added cruelty to his courage; after a fashion he was religious, and a short shrift and a cord were good enough for heretics and adversaries of his King. An unlettered soldier, Monluc, by virtue of his energy of character and directness of speech, became a most impressive and spirited narrator. His Memoirs close with a sigh for stern and inviolable solitude. Among the Pyrenean rocks he had formerly observed a lonely monastery, in view at once of Spain and France; there it was his wish to end his days.

From the opposite party in the great religious and political strife came the temperate Memoirs of Lanoue, the simple and beautiful record of her husband's life by Madame de Mornay, and that of his own career, written in an old age of gloom and passion, by D'Aubigné. The ideas of Henri IV.—himself a royal author in his *Lettres missives*—are embodied in the *Œconomies Royales* of the statesman Sully, whose secretaries were employed for the occasion in laboriously reciting his words and deeds as they had learnt them from their chief. The superficial aspects of the life of society, the manners and morals—or lack of morals—of the time, are lightly and brightly exhibited by PIERRE DE BOURDEILLE, lord of BRANTÔME, Catholic abbé, soldier and courtier, observer of the great world, gossip of amorous secrets. His *Vies des Hommes Illustres et des Grands Capitaines*, his *Vies des*

Dames Illustres et des Dames Galantes, and his *Mémoires* contained matter too dangerous, perhaps, for publication during his lifetime, but the author cherished the thought of his posthumous renown. Brantôme, wholly indifferent to good and evil, had a vivid interest in life; virtue and vice concerned him alike and equally, if only they had vivacity, movement, colour; and although, as with Monluc, it was a physical calamity that made him turn to authorship, he wrote with a naïve art, an easy grace, and abundant spirit. To correct and complete Brantôme's narrative as it related to herself, Marguerite, Queen of Navarre, first wife of Henri IV., prepared her unfinished Memoirs, which opens the delightful series of autobiographies and reminiscences of women. Her account of the night of St. Bartholomew is justly celebrated; the whole record, indeed, is full of interest; but there were passages of her life which it was natural that she should pass over in silence; her sins of omission, as Bayle has observed, are many.[1]

The controversies of the civil wars produced a militant literature, in which the extreme parties contended with passion, while between these a middle party, the aspirants to conciliation, pleaded for the ways of prudence, and, if possible, of peace. FRANÇOIS HOTMAN, the effect of whose Latin *Franco-Gallia*, a political treatise presenting the Huguenot demands, has been compared to that of Rousseau's *Contrat Social*, launched his eloquent invective against the Cardinal de Lorraine, in the *Epistre envoyée au Tigre de la France*. Hubert Languet, the devoted friend

[1] The *Mémoires-Journeaux* of Pierre de l'Estoile are a great magazine of the gains of the writer's disinterested curiosity. The *Lettres* of D'Ossat and the *Négotiations* of the President Jeannin are of importance in the records of diplomacy

of Philip Sidney, in his *Vindiciæ contra Tyrannos*, justified rebellion against princes who violate by their commands the laws of God. D'Aubigné, in his *Confession de Sancy*, attacked with characteristic ardour the apostates and waverers of the time, above the rest that threefold recanter of his faith, Harlay de Sancy. Marnix de Sainte-Aldegonde, in his *Tableau des Différands de la Religion*, mingles theological erudition with his raillery against the Roman communion. Henri Estienne applied the spirit and learning of a great humanist to religious controversy in the second part of his *Apologie pour Hérodote;* the marvellous tales of the Greek historian may well be true, he sarcastically maintains, when in this sixteenth century the abuses of the Roman Church seem to pass all belief. On the other hand, Du Perron, a cardinal in 1604, replied to the arguments and citations of the heretics. As the century drew towards its close, violence declined; the struggle was in a measure appeased. In earlier days the Chancellor, Michel de l'Hospital, had hoped to establish harmony between the rival parties; grief for the massacre of St. Bartholomew hastened his death. The learned Duplessis-Mornay, leader and guide of the Reformed Churches of France, a devoted servant of Henri of Navarre, while fervent in his own beliefs, was too deeply attached to the common faith of Christianity to be an extreme partisan. The reconciliation of Henri IV. with the Church of Rome, which delivered France from anarchy, was, however, a grief to some of his most loyal supporters, and of these Duplessis-Mornay was the most eminent.

The cause of Henri against the League was served by the manuscript circulation of a prose satire, with inter-

spersed pieces of verse, the work of a group of writers, moderate Catholics or converted Protestants, who loved their country and their King, the *Satire Ménippée*.[1] When it appeared in print (1594; dated on the title-page 1593) the cause was won; the satire rose upon a wave of success, like a gleaming crest of bitter spray. It is a parody of the Estates of the League which had been ineffectually convoked to make choice of a king. Two Rabelaisian charlatans, one from Spain, one from Lorraine, offer their drugs for sale in the court of the Louvre; the virtues of the Spanish Catholicon, a divine electuary, are manifold—it will change the blackest criminal into a spotless lamb, it will transform a vulgar bonnet to a cardinal's hat, and at need can accomplish a score of other miracles. Presently the buffoon Estates file past to their assembly; the hall in which they meet is tapestried with grotesque scenes from history; the order of the sitting is determined, and the harangues begin, harangues in which each speaker exposes his own ambitions, greeds, hypocrisies, and egoism, until Monsieur d'Aubray, the orator of the *tiers état*, closes the debate with a speech in turn indignant, ironical, or grave in its commiseration for the popular wrongs—an utterance of bourgeois honesty and good sense. The writers—Canon Pierre Leroy; Gillot, clerk-advocate of the Parliament of Paris; Rapin, a lettered combatant at Ivry; Jean Passerat, poet and commentator on Rabelais; Chrestien and Pithou, two Protestants discreetly converted by force of events—met in a room of Gillot's house, where, according to the legend, Boileau was afterwards born, and there concocted the venom of their pamphlet. Its wit, in spite of

[1] Varro, who to a certain extent copied from Menippus the Gadarene, had called his satires *Saturae Menippeae*: hence the title.

some extravagances and the tedium of certain pages, is admirable; farce and comedy, sarcasm and moral prudence alternate; and it had the great good fortune of a satire, that of coming at the lucky moment.

The French Huguenots were not without their poets. Two of these—Guillaume Saluste, Seigneur du Bartas, and Agrippa d'Aubigné—are eminent. The fame of Du Bartas (1544–90) was indeed European. Ronsard sent him a pen of gold, and feared at a later time the rivalry of his renown; Tasso drew inspiration from his verse; the youthful Milton read him with admiration in the rendering by Sylvester; long afterwards Goethe honoured him with praise beyond his deserts. To read his poems now, notwithstanding passages of vivid description and passages of ardent devotional feeling, would need rare literary fortitude. His originality lies in the fact that while he was a disciple of the Pléiade, a disciple crude, intemperate, and provincial, he deserted Greece and Rome, and drew his subjects from Hebraic sources. His *Judith* (1573), composed by the command of Jeanne d'Albret, has more of Lucan than of Virgil in its over-emphatic style. *La Sepmaine, ou la Création en Sept Journées*, appeared in 1578, and within a few years had passed through thirty editions. Du Bartas is always copious, sometimes brilliant, sometimes majestic; but laboured and rhetorical description, never ending and still beginning, fatigues the mind; an encyclopædia of the works of creation weighs heavily upon the imagination; we sigh for the arrival of the day of rest.

Théodore-Agrippa d'Aubigné (1550–1630) was not among the admirers of Du Bartas. His natural temper was framed for pleasure; at another time he might have been known only as a poet of the court, of lighter satire, and of

love; the passions of the age transformed him into an ardent and uncompromising combatant. His classical culture was wide and exact; at ten years old he translated the *Crito;* Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Italian, Spanish were at his command. He might, had France been at peace with herself, have appeared in literature as a somewhat belated Ronsardist; but his hereditary cause became his own. While still a child he accepted from his father, in presence of the withering heads of the conspirators of Amboise, the oath of immitigable vengeance. Pursuits, escapes, the camp, the battle-field, the prison, the court made up no small part of his life of vicissitude and of unalterable resolve. He roused Henri of Navarre from the lethargy of pleasure; he warned the King against the crime of apostasy; he dreaded the mass, but could cheerfully have accepted the stake. Extreme in his rage of party, he yet in private affairs could show good sense and generosity. His elder years were darkened by what he regarded as treason in his King, and by the falling away from the faith of that son who, by an irony of fate, became the father of Madame de Maintenon. Four times condemned to death, he died in exile at the age of eighty.

D'Aubigné's satirical tale, *Les Aventures du Baron de Fœneste*, contrasts the man who *appears*—spreading his plumes in the sunshine of the court—with the man who *is*, the man who lives upon his estate, among his rustic neighbours, tilling his fields and serving his people and his native land. As an elegiac poet D'Aubigné is little more than a degenerate issue from the Pléiade. It is in his vehement poem of mourning and indignation and woe, *Les Tragiques*, begun in 1577 but not published till 1616, that his power is fully manifested. To D'Aubigné, as

its author, the characterisation of Sainte-Beuve exactly applies: "Juvénal du xvi. siècle, âpre, austère, inexorable, hérissé d'hyperboles, étincelant de beautés, rachetant une rudesse grossière par une sublime énergie." In seven books it tells of the misery of France, the treachery of princes, the abuse of public law and justice, the fires and chains of religious persecution, the vengeance of God against the enemies of the saints, and the final judgment of sinners, when air and fire and water become the accusers of those who have perverted the powers of nature to purposes of cruelty. The poem is ill composed, its rhetoric is often strained or hard and metallic, its unrelieved horrors oppress the heart; but the cry of true passion is heard in its finer pages; from amid the turmoil and smoke, living tongues of flame seem to dart forth which illuminate the gloom. The influence of *Les Tragiques* may still be felt in passages of Victor Hugo's fulgurant eloquence.

In the midst of strife, however, there were men who pursued the disinterested service of humanity and whose work made for peace. The great surgeon Ambroise Paré, full of tolerance and deeply pious, advanced his healing art on the battle-field or amid the ravages of pestilence, and left a large contribution to the literature of science Bernard Palissy, a devout Huguenot, was not only the inventor of "rustic figulines," the designer of enamelled cups and platters, but a true student of nature, who would substitute the faithful observation of phenomena for vain and ambitious theory. Olivier de Serres, another disciple of Calvin, cultivated his fields, helped to enrich France by supporting Henri IV. in the introduction of the industry in silk, and amassed his knowledge and

experience in his admirably written *Théâtre d'Agriculture*. At a later date Antoine de Montchrestien, adventurous and turbulent in his Protestant zeal, the writer of tragedies which connect the sixteenth century with the classical school of later years, became the advocate of a protectionist and a colonial policy in his *Traicté de l'Œconomie Politique*; the style of his essay towards economic reform has some of the passion and enthusiasm of a poet.

A refuge from the troubles and vicissitudes of the time was sought by some in a Christianised Stoicism. Guillaume du Vair (1556–1621), eminent as a magistrate, did not desert his post of duty; he pleaded eloquently, as chief orator of the middle party of conciliation, on behalf of unity under Henri of Navarre. In his treatise on French eloquence he endeavoured to elevate the art of public speaking above laboured pedantry to true human discourse. But while taking part in the contentious progress of events, he saw the flow of human affairs as from an elevated plateau. In the conversations with friends which form his treatise *De la Constance et Consolation ès Calamités Publiques*, Du Vair's counsels are those of courage and resignation, not unmingled with hope. He rendered into French the stoical morals of Epictetus; and in his own *Sainte Philosophie* and *Philosophie Morale des Stoïques* he endeavoured, with honest purpose, rather than with genius, to ally speculation to religion, and to show how human reason can lead the way to those ethical truths which are the guiding lights of conduct.

Perhaps certitude sufficient for human life may be found by Imitation; a few established truths will, after all, carry us from the cradle to the grave; and beyond the bounds of certitude lies a limitless and fascinating

field for observation and dubious conjecture. Amid the multitude of new ideas which the revival of antiquity brought with it, amid the hot disputes of the rival churches, amid the fierce contentions of civil war, how delightful to possess one's soul in quiet, to be satisfied with the needful knowledge, small though it be, which is vouchsafed to us, and to amuse the mind with every opinion and every varying humour of that curious and wayward creature man! And who so wayward, who so wavering as one's self in all those parts of our composite being which are subject to the play of time and circumstance? Such, in an age of confusion working towards clearness, an age of belligerency tending towards concord, were the reflections of a moralist, the most original of his century—Michel de Montaigne.

MICHEL EYQUEM, SEIGNEUR DE MONTAIGNE, was born at a château in Périgord, in the year 1533. His father, whom Montaigne always remembered with affectionate reverence, was a man of original ideas. He entrusted the infant to the care of peasants, wishing to attach him to the people; educated him in Latin as if his native tongue; roused him at morning from sleep to the sound of music. From his sixth to his thirteenth year Montaigne was at the Collège de Guyenne, where he took the leading parts in Latin tragedies composed by Muret and Buchanan. In 1554 he succeeded his father as councillor in the court *des aides* of Périgueux, the members of which were soon afterwards incorporated in the Parliament of Bordeaux. But nature had not destined Montaigne for the duties of the magistracy; he saw too many sides of every question; he chose rather to fail in justice than in humanity. In 1565 he acquired a large fortune by marriage, and having lost

his father, he retired from public functions in 1570, to enjoy a tranquil existence of meditation, and of rambling through books. He had published, a year before, in fulfilment of his father's desire, a translation of the *Theologia Naturalis* of Raimond de Sebonde, a Spanish philosopher of the fifteenth century; and now he occupied himself in preparing for the press the writings of his dead friend La Boétie. Love for his father and love for his friend were the two passions of Montaigne's life. From 1571 to 1580 he dwelt in retreat, in company with his books and his ideas, indulging his humour for tranquil freedom of the mind. It was his custom to enrich the margins of his books with notes, and his earliest essays may be regarded as an extension of such notes; Plutarch and Seneca were, above all, his favourites; afterwards, the volume which he read with most enjoyment, and annotated most curiously, was that of his own life.

And, indeed, Montaigne's daily life, with outward monotony and internal variety, was a pleasant miscellany on which to comment. He was of a middle temperament, "between the jovial and the melancholic"; a lover of solitude, yet the reverse of morose; choosing bright companions rather than sad; able to be silent, as the mood took him, or to gossip; loyal and frank; a hater of hypocrisy and falsehood; a despiser of empty ceremony; disposed to interpret all things to the best; cheerful among his children; careless of exercising authority; incapable of household management; trustful and kind towards his neighbours; indulgent in his judgments, yet warm in his admiration of old, heroic virtue. His health, which in boyhood had been robust, was shaken in middle life by an internal malady. He

travelled in the hope of finding strength, visiting Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Tyrol, and observing, with a serious amusement, the varieties of men and manners. While still absent from France, in 1581, he learned that he had been elected mayor of Bordeaux; he hesitated in accepting an honourable but irksome public office; the King permitted no dallying, and Montaigne obeyed. Two years later the mayor was re-elected; it was a period of difficulty; a Catholic and a Royalist, he had a heretic brother, and himself yielded to the charm of Henri of Navarre; "for the Ghibelline I was a Guelph, for the Guelph a Ghibelline." When, in 1585, pestilence raged in Bordeaux, Montaigne's second period of office had almost expired; he quitted the city, and the election of his successor took place in his absence. His last years were brightened by the friendship — almost filial — of Mlle. de Gournay, an ardent admirer, and afterwards editor, of the *Essais*. In 1592 Montaigne died, when midway in his sixtieth year.

The first two books of the *Essais* were published by their author in 1580; in 1588 they appeared in an augmented text, with the addition of the third book. The text superintended by Mlle. de Gournay, based upon a revised and enlarged copy left by Montaigne, is of the year 1595.

The unity of the book, which makes no pretence to unity, may be found in the fact that all its topics are concerned with a common subject—the nature of man; that the writer accepts himself as the example of humanity most open to his observation; and that the same tranquil, yet insatiable curiosity is everywhere present. Man, as conceived by Montaigne, is of all creatures the most variable, unstable, inconstant. The species

includes the saint and the brute, the hero and the craven, while between the extremes lies the average man, who may be anything that nature, custom, or circumstances make him. And as the species varies indefinitely, so each individual varies endlessly from himself: his conscience controls his temperament; his temperament betrays his conscience; external events transform him from what he was. Do we seek to establish our moral being upon the rock of philosophical dogma? The rock gives way under our feet, and scatters as if sand. Such truth as we can attain by reason is relative truth; let us pass through knowledge to a wise acceptance of our ignorance; let us be contented with the probabilities which are all that our reason can attain. The truths of conduct, as far as they are ascertainable, were known long since to the ancient moralists. Can any virtue surpass the old Roman virtue? We believe in God, although we know little about His nature or His operations; and why should we disbelieve in Christianity, which happens to be part of the system of things under which we are born? But why, also, should we pay such a compliment to opinions different from our own as to burn a heretic because he prefers the Pope of Geneva to the Pope of Rome? Let each of us ask himself, "Que sais-je?"—"What do I really know?" and the answer will serve to temper our zeal.

While Montaigne thus saps our confidence in the conclusions of the intellect, when they pass beyond a narrow bound, he pays a homage to the force of will; his admiration for the heroic men of Plutarch is ardent. An Epicurean by temperament, he is a Stoic through his imagination; but for us and for himself, who are no heroes, the appropriate form of Stoical virtue is

moderation within our sphere, and a wise indifference, or at most a disinterested curiosity, in matters which lie beyond that sphere. Let us resign ourselves to life, such as it is; let us resign ourselves to death; and let the resignation be cheerful or even gay. To spend ourselves in attempted reforms of the world, of society, of governments, is vain. The world will go its own way; it is for us to accept things as they are, to observe the laws of our country because it is ours, to smile at them if we please, and to extract our private gains from a view of the reformers, the enthusiasts, the dogmatists, the credulous, the combatants; there is one heroism possible for us—the heroism of good sense. "It is an absolute perfection, and as it were divine," so we read on the last page of Florio's translation of the *Essais*, "for a man to know how to enjoy his being loyally. We seek for other conditions because we understand not the use of ours; and go out of ourselves, forasmuch as we know not what abiding there is. We may long enough get upon stilts, for be we upon them, yet must we go with our legs. And sit we upon the highest throne of the world, yet sit we upon our own tail. The best and most commendable lives, and best pleasing me are (in my conceit), those which with order are fitted, and with decorum are ranged, to the common mould and human model; but without wonder or extravagancy. Now hath old age need to be handled more tenderly. Let us recommend it unto that God who is the protector of health and fountain of all wisdom; but blithe and social." And with a stanza of Epicurean optimism from Horace the Essay closes.

Such, or somewhat after this fashion, is the doctrine of Montaigne. It is conveyed to the reader without system,

in the most informal manner, in a series of discourses which seem to wander at their own will, resembling a bright and easy conversation, vivid with imagery, enlivened by anecdote and citation, reminiscences from history, observations of curious manners and customs, offering constantly to view the person of Montaigne himself in the easiest undress. The style, although really carefully studied and superintended, has an air of light facility, hardly interposing between the author and his reader; the book is of all books the most sociable, a living companion rather than a book, playful and humorous, amiable and well bred, learned without pedantry, and wise without severity.

During the last three years of his life Montaigne enjoyed the friendship of a disciple who was already celebrated for his eloquence as a preacher. PIERRE CHARRON (1541–1603), legist and theologian, under the influence of Montaigne's ideas, aspired to be a philosopher. It was as a theologian that he wrote his book of the *Trois Verités*, which attempts to demonstrate the existence of God, the truth of Christianity, and the exclusive orthodoxy of the Roman communion. It was as a philosopher, in the *Traité de la Sagesse*, that he systematised the informal scepticism of Montaigne. Instead of putting the question, "Que sais-je?" Charron ventures the assertion, "Je ne sais." He exhibits man's weakness, misery, and bondage to the passions; gives counsel for the enfranchisement of the mind; and studies the virtues of justice, prudence, temperance, and valiance. God has created man, says Charron, to know the truth; never can he know it of himself or by human means, and one who despairs of reason is in the best position for accepting divine instruction;

a Pyrrhonist at least will never be a heretic; even if religion be regarded as an invention of man, it is an invention which has its uses. Not a few passages of the *Sagesse* are directly borrowed, with slight rehandling, from Montaigne and from Du Vair; but, instead of Montaigne's smiling agnosticism, we have a grave and formal indictment of humanity; we miss the genial humour and kindly temper of the master; we miss the amiable egotism and the play of a versatile spirit; we miss the charm of an incomparable literary style.

BOOK THE THIRD

THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

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CHAPTER I

LITERARY FREEDOM AND LITERARY ORDER

With the restoration of order under Henri IV. the delights of peace began to be felt; a mundane society, polished and pleasure-loving, began to be constituted, and before many years had passed the influence of women and of the *salon* appeared in literature. Should such a society be permitted to remain oblivious to spiritual truth, or to repose on the pillow of scepticism provided by Charron and Montaigne? Might it not be captured for religion, if religion were presented in its most gracious aspect, as a source of peace and joy, a gentle discipline of the heart? If one who wore the Christian armour should throw over his steel some robe of courtly silk, with floral adornments, might he not prove a persuasive champion of the Cross? Such was the hope of François de Sales (1567–1622), Bishop of Geneva, when, in 1608, he published his *Introduction à la Vie Dévote*. The angelic doctor charmed by his mere presence, his grace of person, his winning smile,

his dove's eyes; he showed how amiable piety might be; his eloquence was festooned with blossoms; he strewed the path to heaven with roses; he conquered by docility; yet under his sweetness lay strength, and to methodise and popularise moral self-superintendence was to achieve much. The *Traité de l'Amour de Dieu* (1616), while it expounds the highest reaches of mystical devotion, yet presents religion as accessible to every child of God. With his tender and ardent devotion, something of a poet's sentiment for nature was united; but mysticism and poetry were both subservient to his aim of regulating the conduct of the heart; he desired to show how one may remain in the world, and yet not be of the world; by personal converse and by his spiritual letters he became the director of courtiers and of ladies. The motto of the literary Academy which he founded at Annecy expresses his spirit—*flores fructusque perennes*—flowers for their own sake, but chiefly for the sake of fruit. Much of the genius for holiness of the courtly saint has passed into the volume of reminiscences by Bishop Camus, his companion and disciple—*l'Esprit de Saint François de Sales.*

A mundane society, however, where fine gentlemen and ladies meet to admire and be admired, needs other outlets for its imagination than that of the primrose way to Paradise. The labour of the fields had inspired Olivier de Serres with the prose Georgics of his *Théâtre d'Agriculture*, a work directed towards utility; the romance of the fields, and the pastoral, yet courtly, loves of a French Arcady, were the inspiration of the endless prose bucolics found in the *Astrée* of HONORÉ D'URFÉ. The Renaissance delight in the pastoral had passed from Italy to Spain; through the *Diana* of the Spanish Montemayor

it passed to France. After a period of turbulent strife there was a fascination in visions of a peace, into which, if warfare entered, the strange irruption only enhanced an habitual calm. A whole generation waited long to learn the issue of the passion of Celadon and Astrée. The romance, of which the earliest part appeared in 1610, or earlier, was not completely published until 1627, when its author was no longer living.[1] The scene is laid in the fields of d'Urfé's familiar Forez and on the banks of the Lignon; the time is of Merovingian antiquity. The shepherd Celadon, banished on suspicion of faithlessness from the presence of his beloved Astrée, seeks death beneath the stream; he is saved by the nymphs, escapes the amorous pursuit of Galatea, assumes a feminine garb, and, protected by the Druid Adamas, has the felicity of daily beholding his shepherdess. At length he declares himself, and is overwhelmed with reproaches; true lover that he is, when he offers his body to the devouring lions of the Fountain of Love, the beasts refuse their prey; the venerable Druid discreetly guides events; Celadon's fidelity receives its reward in marriage, and the banks of the Lignon become a scene of universal joy. The colours of the *Astrée* are faded now as those of some ancient tapestry, but during many years its success was prodigious. D'Urfé's highest honour, of many, is the confession of La Fontaine:—

> "*Étant petit garçon je lisais son roman,*
> *Et je le lis encore ayant la barbe grise.*"

The *Astrée* won its popularity, in part because it united the old attraction of a chivalric or heroic strain with that of the newer pastoral; in part because it idealised the gallantries and developed the amorous casuistry of the

[1] It should be noted that the close of the *Astrée* is by D'Urfé's secretary Baro.

day, not without a real sense of the power of love ; in part because it was supposed to exhibit ideal portraits of distinguished contemporaries. It was the parent of a numerous progeny ; and as the heroic romance of the seventeenth century is derived in direct succession from the loves of Celadon and Astrée, so the comic romance, beside all that it owes to the tradition of the *esprit gaulois*, owes something to the mocking gaiety with which d'Urfé exhibits the adventures and emotional vicissitudes of his inconstant shepherd Hylas.

In the political and social reconstruction which followed the civil and religious wars, the need of discipline and order in literature was felt ; in this province, also, unity under a law was seen to be desirable. The work of the Pléiade had in a great measure failed ; they had attempted to organise poetry and its methods, and poetry was still disorganised. To reduce the realm of caprice and fantasy to obedience to law was the work of FRANÇOIS DE MALHERBE. Born at Caen in 1555, he had published in 1587 his *Larmes de Saint Pierre*, an imitation of the Italian poem by Tansillo, in a manner which his maturer judgment must have condemned. It was not until about his fortieth year that he found his true direction. Du Vair, with whom he was acquainted, probably led him to a true conception of the nature of eloquence. Vigorous of character, clear in understanding, with no affluence of imagination and no excess of sensibility, Malherbe was well qualified for establishing lyrical poetry upon the basis of reason, and of general rather than individual sentiment. He chose the themes of his odes from topics of public interest, or founded them on those commonplaces of emotion which are part of the possession of all men who think and feel.

If he composed his verses for some great occasion, he sought for no curiosities of a private imagination, but considered in what way its nobler aspects ought to be regarded by the community at large; if he consoled a friend for losses caused by death, he held his personal passion under restraint; he generalised, and was content to utter more admirably than others the accepted truths about the brevity and beauty of life, and the inevitable doom of death. What he gained by such a process of abstraction, he lost in vivid characterisation; his imagery lacks colour; the movement of his verse is deliberate and calculated; his ideas are rigorously enchained one to another.

It has been said that poetry—the overflow of individual emotion—is overheard; while oratory—the appeal to an audience—is heard. The processes of Malherbe's art were essentially oratorical; the lyrical cry is seldom audible in his verse; it is the poetry of eloquence thrown into studied stanzas. But the greater poetry of the seventeenth century in France—its odes, its satires, its epistles, its noble dramatic scenes—and much of its prose literature are of the nature of oratory; and for the progress of such poetry, and even of such prose, Malherbe prepared a highway. He aimed at a reformation of the language, which, rejecting all words either base, provincial, archaic, technical, or over-learned and over-curious, should employ the standard French, pure and dignified, as accepted by the people of Paris. In his hands language became too exclusively an instrument of the intelligence; yet with this instrument great things were achieved by his successors. He methodised and regulated versification, insisting on rich and exact rhymes, condemning all licence and infirmity of structure,

condemning harshness of sound, inversion, hiatus, negligence in accommodating the cesura to the sense, the free gliding of couplet into couplet. It may be said that he rendered verse mechanical; but within the arrangement which he prescribed, admirable effects were attainable by the mastery of genius. He pondered every word, weighed every syllable, and thought no pains ill-spent if only clearness, precision, the logic of ordonnance, a sustained harmony were at length secured; and until the day of his death, in 1628, no decline in his art can be perceived.

Malherbe fell far short of being a great poet, but in the history of seventeenth-century classicism, in the effort of the age to rationalise the forms of art, his name is of capital importance. It cannot be said that he founded a school. His immediate disciples, MAYNARD and RACAN, failed to develop the movement which he had initiated. Maynard laid verse by the side of verse with exact care, and sometimes one or the other verse is excellent, but he lacked sustained force and flight. Racan had genuine inspiration; a true feeling for nature appears in his dramatic pastoral, the *Bergeries* (1625); unhappily he had neither the culture nor the patience needed for perfect execution; he was rather an admirable amateur than an artist. But if Malherbe founded no school, he gave an eminent example, and the argument which he maintained in the cause of poetic art was at a later time carried to its conclusion by Boileau.

Malherbe's reform was not accepted without opposition. While he pleaded for the supremacy of order, regularity, law, the voice of MATHURIN REGNIER (1573-1613) was heard on behalf of freedom. A nephew of the

poet Desportes, Regnier was loyal to his uncle's fame and to the memory of the Pléiade; if Malherbe spoke slightingly of Desportes, and cast aside the tradition of the school of Ronsard, the retort was speedy and telling against the arrogant reformer, tyrant of words and syllables, all whose achievement amounted to no more than *proser de la rime et rimer de la prose.* Unawares, indeed, Regnier, to a certain extent, co-operated with Malherbe, who recognised the genius of his younger adversary; he turned away from languid elegances to observation of life and truth of feeling; if he imitated his masters Horace and Ovid, or the Italian satiric poets, with whose writings he had become acquainted during two periods of residence in Rome, his imitations were not obsequious, like those of the Pléiade, but vigorous and original, like those of Boileau; in his sense of comedy he anticipates some of Molière's feeling for the humorous perversities of human character; his language is vivid, plain, and popular. The classical school of later years could not reject Regnier. Boileau declared that no poet before Molière was so well acquainted with the manners and characters of men; through his impersonal study of life he is indeed classic. But his ardent nature rebelled against formal rule; he trusted to the native force of genius, and let his ideas and passions lead him where they would. His satires are those of a painter whose eye is on his object, and who handles his brush with a vigorous discretion; they are criticisms of society and its types of folly or of vice, full of force and colour, yet general in their intention, for, except at the poet who had affronted his uncle, "le bon Regnier" struck at no individual. Most admirable, amid much that is admirable, is the picture of the old worldling Macette, whose

veil of pretended piety is gradually dropped as she discourses with growing wantonness to the maiden whom she would lead in the way she should not go: Macette is no unworthy elder of the family of Tartufe. Regnier confesses freely the passions of his own irregular life; had it been wisely conducted, his genius might have carried him far; as it was, he passed away prematurely at the age of forty, the victim of his own intemperate pursuit of pleasure.

Still more unfortunate was the life of a younger poet, who, while honouring the genius of Malherbe, pronounced, like Regnier, for freedom rather than order, and maintained that each writer of genius should be a law to himself—a poet whom his contemporaries esteemed too highly, and whom Malherbe, and afterwards Boileau, unjustly depreciated—THÉOPHILE DE VIAU. A Huguenot who had abjured his faith, afterwards pursued as a libertine in conduct and as a freethinker, Théophile was hunted, imprisoned, exiled, condemned to execution, and died exhausted in 1626, when only six-and-thirty years old. He has been described as the last lyrical poet of his age, and the first of the poetical exponents of the new preciosity. His dramatic *Pyrame et Thisbé*, though disfigured by those *concetti* which the Italian Marini—an honoured guest at the French court—and the invasion of Spanish tastes had made the mode, is not without touches of genuine pathos. The odes of Théophile are of free and musical movement, his descriptions of natural beauty are graciously coloured, his judgment in literary matters was sound and original; but he lacked the patient workmanship which art demands, and in proclaiming himself on the side of freedom as against order, he was retrograding from the position which

had been secured for poetry under the leadership of Malherbe.

With social order came the desire for social refinement, and following the desire for refinement came the prettinesses and affectations of over-curious elegance. Peace returned to France with the monarchy of Henri IV., but the Gascon manners of his court were rude. Catherine de Vivonne, Marquise de Rambouillet, whose mother was a great Roman lady, and whose father had been French ambassador at Rome, young, beautiful, delicately nurtured, retired in 1608 from the court, and a few years later opened her *salon* of the Hôtel de Rambouillet to such noble and cultivated persons as were willing to be the courtiers of womanly grace and wit and taste. The rooms were arranged and decorated for the purposes of pleasure; the *chambre bleue* became the sanctuary of polite society, where Arthénice (an anagram for "Catherine") was the high priestess. To dance, to sing, to touch the lute was well; to converse with wit and refinement was something more admirable; the *salon* became a mart for the exchange of ideas; the fashion of Spain was added to the fashion of Italy; Platonism, Petrarchism, Marinism, Gongorism, the spirit of romance and the daintinesses of learning and of pedantry met and mingled. Hither came Malherbe, Racan, Chapelain, Vaugelas; at a later time Balzac, Segrais, Voiture, Godeau; and again, towards the mid-years of the century, Saint-Évremond and La Rochefoucauld. Here Corneille read his plays from the *Cid* to *Rodogune;* here Bossuet, a marvellous boy, improvised a midnight discourse, and Voiture declared he had never heard one preach so early or so late.

As Julie d'Angennes and her sister Angélique attained an age to divide their mother's authority in the *salon*, its

sentiment grew quintessential, and its taste was subtilised well-nigh to inanity. They censured *Polyeucte;* they found Chapelain's unhappy epic "perfectly beautiful, but excessively tiresome"; they laid their heads together over Descartes' *Discours de la Méthode,* and profoundly admired the philosopher; they were enraptured by the madrigals on flowers, more than three score in number, offered as the *Guirlande de Julie* on Mademoiselle's fête; they gravely debated the question which should be the approved spelling, *muscadin* or *muscardin.* In 1649 they were sundered into rival parties—*Uranistes* and *Jobelins*—tilting in literary lists on behalf of the respective merits of a sonnet by Voiture and a sonnet by Benserade. The word *précieux* is said to date from 1650. The Marquise de Rambouillet survived Molière's satiric comedy *Les Précieuses Ridicules* (1659) by several years. Mme. de Sévigné, Mme. de la Fayette, Fléchier, the preacher of fashion, were among the illustrious personages of the decline of her *salon.* We smile at its follies and affectations; but, while it harmed literature by magnifying things that were petty, it did something to refine manners, to quicken ideas, to encourage clearness and grace of expression, and to make the pursuit of letters an avenue to social distinction. Through the Hôtel de Rambouillet, and the *salons* which both in Paris and the provinces imitated its modes, and pushed them to extravagance, the influence of women on literature became a power for good and for evil.

The "Works," as they were styled, of VINCENT VOITURE (1598–1648)—posthumously published—represent one side of the spirit of the *salon.* Capable of something higher, he lived to exhibit his ingenuity and wit in little ways, now by a cleverly-turned verse, now

by a letter of gallantry. Although of humble origin, he was for long a presiding genius in the *chambre bleue* of Arthénice. His play of mind was unhappily without a subject, and to be witty on nothings puts a strain on wit. Voiture expends much labour on being light, much serious effort in attaining vanities. His letters were admired as models of ingenious elegance; the life has long since passed from their raillery and badinage, but Voiture may be credited with having helped to render French prose pliant for the uses of pleasure.

The dainty trifles of the school of preciosity fluttered at least during the sunshine of a day. Its ambitious epics, whatever attention they may have attracted in their time, cannot be said to have ever possessed real life. The great style is not to be attained by tagging platitudes with points. The *Saint Louis* of Lemoyne, the *Clovis* of Desmarets de Saint-Sorlin, the *Alaric* of Scudéry, the *Charlemagne* of Louis le Laboureur remain only as evidences of the vanity of misplaced ambition. During twenty years JEAN CHAPELAIN, a man of no mean ability in other fields, was occupied with his *La Pucelle d'Orléans;* twelve cantos at length appeared magnificently in 1656, and won a brief applause; the remaining twelve cantos lie still inedited. The matter of history was too humble for Chapelain's genius; history is ennobled by an allegorical intention; France becomes the soul of man; Charles, swayed between good and evil, is the human will; the Maid of Orleans is divine grace. The satire of Boileau, just in its severity, was hardly needed to slay the slain.

In the prose romances, which are epics emancipated from the trammels of verse, there was more vitality. Bishop Camus, the friend of François de Sales, had

attempted to sanctify the movement which d'Urfé had initiated; but the spirit of the *Astrée* would not unite in a single stream with the spirit of the *Introduction à la Vie Dévote*. Gomberville is remembered rather for the remorseless war which he waged against the innocent conjunction *car*, never to be admitted into polite literature, than for his encyclopædic romance *Polexandre*, in which geography is illustrated by fiction, as copious as it is fantastic; yet it was something to annex for the first time the ocean, with all its marvels, to the scenery of adventure. Gombauld, the *Beau Ténébreux* of the Hôtel de Rambouillet, secured a reading for his unreadable *Endymion* by the supposed transparence of his allusions to living persons. Desmarets de Saint-Sorlin relieved the amorous exaltations of his *Ariane*, a tale of the time of Nero, by excursions which touch the borders of comedy. These are books on which the dust gathers thick in ancient libraries.

But the romances of LA CALPRENÈDE and of GEORGES and MADELEINE DE SCUDERY might well be taken down by any lover of literature who possesses the virtue of fortitude. Since d'Urfé's day the taste for pastoral had declined; the newer romance was gallant and heroic. Legend or history supplied its framework; but the central motive was ideal love at odds with circumstance, love the inspirer of limitless devotion and daring. The art of construction was imperfectly understood; the narratives are of portentous length; ten, twelve, twenty volumes were needed to deploy the sentiments and the adventures. In *Cassandre*, in *Cléopâtre*, in *Pharamond*, La Calprenède exhibits a kind of universal history; the dissolution of the Macedonian empire, the decline of the empire of Rome, the beginnings of the French

monarchy are successively presented. But the chief personages are idealised portraits drawn from the society of the author's time. The spirit of the Hôtel de Rambouillet is transferred to the period when the Scythian Oroondate was the lover of Statira, daughter of Darius; the Prince de Condé masks in *Cléopâtre* as Coriolan; Pharamond is the Grand Monarch in disguise. Notwithstanding the faded gallantries and amorous casuistry of La Calprenède's interminable romances, a certain spirit of real heroism, offspring of the writer's ardent imagination and bright southern temper, breathes through them. They were the delight of Mme. de Sévigné and of La Fontaine; even in the eighteenth century they were the companions of Crebillon, and were not forgotten by Rousseau.

Still more popular was *Artamène, ou le Grand Cyrus.* Mdlle. de Scudéry, the "Sapho" of her Saturday *salon*, a true *précieuse*, as good of heart and quick of wit as she was unprepossessing of person, supplied the sentiment and metaphysics of love to match the gasconading exploits of her brother's invention. It was the time not only of preciosity, but of the Fronde, with its turbulent adventures and fantastic chivalry. Under the names of Medes and Persians could be discovered the adventurers, the gallants, the fine ladies of the seventeenth century. In *Clélie* an attempt is made to study the curiosities of passion; it is a manual of polite love and elegant manners; in its *carte de Tendre* we can examine the topography of love-land, trace the routes to the three cities of "Tendre," and learn the dangers of the way. Thus the heroic romance reached its term; its finer spirit became the possession of the tragic drama, where it was purified and rendered sane. The modern novel had wandered

in search of its true self, and had not succeeded in the quest. When *Gil Blas* appeared, it was seen that the novel of incident must also be the novel of character, and that in its imitation of real life it could appropriate some of the possessions which by that time comedy had lost.

The extravagances of sentiment produced a natural reaction. Not a few of the intimates of the Hôtel de Rambouillet found a relief from their fatigue of fine manners and high-pitched emotions in the unedifying jests and merry tales of the tavern. A comic, convivial, burlesque or picaresque literature became, as it were, a parody of the literature of preciosity. Saint-Amand (1594–1661) was at once a disciple of the Italian Marini, the admired "Sapurnius" of the *salon*, author of at least one beautiful ode—*La Solitude*—breathing a gentle melancholy, and a gay singer of bacchic chants. Desmarets de Saint-Sorlin, in his comedy *Les Visionnaires* (1637), mocked the *précieuses*, and was applauded by the spectators of the theatre. One of his heroines is hopelessly enamoured of Alexander the Great; one is enamoured of poetry, and sees life as if it were material for the stage; and the third is enamoured of her own beauty, with its imagined potency over the hearts of men. As early as 1622 CHARLES SOREL expressed, in his *Histoire Comique de Francion*, a Rabelaisian and picaresque tale of low life, the revolt of the *esprit gaulois* against the homage of the imagination to courtly shepherdesses and pastoral cavaliers. It was reprinted more than forty times. In *Le Berger Extravagant* (1628) he attempted a kind of Don Quixote for his own day —an "anti-romance"—which recounts the pastoral follies of a young Parisian bourgeois, whose wits have been set

wandering by such dreams as the *Astrée* had inspired ; its mirth is unhappily overloaded with pedantry.

The master of this school of seventeenth-century realism was PAUL SCARRON (1610–60), the comely little abbé, unconcerned with ecclesiastical scruples or good manners, who, when a paralytic, twisted and tortured by disease, became the husband of D'Aubigné's granddaughter, destined as Madame de Maintenon to become the most influential woman in all the history of France. In his *Virgile Travesti* he produced a vulgar counterpart to the heroic epics, which their own dead-weight would have speedily enough borne downwards to oblivion. His *Roman Comique* (1651), a short and lively narrative of the adventures of a troupe of comedians strolling in the provinces, contrasted with the exaltations, the heroisms, the delicate distresses of the ideal romance. The *Roman Bourgeois* (1666) of ANTOINE FURETIÈRE is a belated example of the group to which *Francion* belongs. The great event of its author's life was his exclusion from the Academy, of which he was a member, on the ground that he had appropriated for the advantage of his Dictionary the results of his fellow-members' researches for the Dictionary, then in progress, of the learned company. His *Roman* is a remarkable study of certain types of middle-class Parisian life, often animated, exact, effective in its satire ; but the analysis of a petty and commonplace world needs some relief of beauty or generosity to make its triviality acceptable, and such relief Furetière will not afford.

Somewhat apart from this group of satiric tales, yet with a certain kinship to them, lie the more fantastic satires of that fiery swashbuckler—"démon des braves" —CYRANO DE BERGERAC (1619–55), *Histoire Comique*

des États et Empires de la Lune, and *Histoire Comique des États et Empires du Soleil.* Cyrano's taste, caught by the mannerisms of Italy and extravagances of Spain, was execrable. To his violences of temper he added a reputation for irreligion. His comedy *Le Pédant Joué* has the honour of having furnished Molière with the most laughable scene of the *Fourberies de Scapin.* The voyages to the moon and the sun, in which the inhabitants, their manners, governments, and ideas, are presented, mingle audacities and caprices of invention with a portion of satiric truth; they lived in the memories of the creator of Gulliver and the creator of Micromégas.

CHAPTER II

THE FRENCH ACADEMY—PHILOSOPHY (DESCARTES)—RELIGION (PASCAL)

THE French Academy, an organised aristocracy of letters, expressed the growing sense that anarchy in literature must end, and that discipline and law must be recognised in things of the mind. It is one of the glories of RICHELIEU that he perceived that literature has a public function, and may indeed be regarded as an affair of the State. His own writings, or those composed under his direction—memoirs; letters; the *Succincte Narration*, which sets forth his policy; the *Testament*, which embodies his counsel in statecraft—belong less to literature than to French history. But he honoured the literary art; he enjoyed the drama; he devised plots for plays, and found docile poets—his Society of five—to carry out his designs.

In 1629 Valentin Conrart, secretary to the King, and one of the frequenters of the Hôtel de Rambouillet, was accustomed to receive weekly a group of distinguished men of letters and literary amateurs, who read their manuscripts aloud, discussed the merits of new works, and considered questions of criticism, grammar, and language. Tidings of these reunions having reached Richelieu, he proposed that the society should receive an official status. By the influence of Chapelain the

objections of certain members were overcome. The *Académie Française* held its first sitting on March 13, 1634; three years later the letters patent were registered; the number of members was fixed at forty; when vacancies occurred, new members were co-opted for life. Its history to the year 1652 was published in the following year by Pellisson, and obtained him admission to a chair. The functions of the learned company were to ascertain, as far as possible, the French language, to regulate grammar, and to act as a literary tribunal if members consented to submit their works to its examination. There were hopes that authoritative treatises on rhetoric and poetics might be issued with its sanction; but these hopes were not fulfilled. A dictionary, of which Chapelain presented the plan in 1638, was, however, undertaken; progressing by slow degrees, the first edition appeared in 1694. Its aim was not to record every word of which an example could be found, but to select those approved by the usage of cultivated society and of the best contemporary or recent authors. Thus it tended to establish for literary use an aristocracy of words; and while literary expression gained in dignity and intellectual precision, gained as an instrument of reason and analysis, such regulation created a danger that it might lose in elements that have affinities with the popular mind—vivacity, colour, picturesqueness, variety. At its commencement no one was more deeply interested in the dictionary than Vaugelas (1585–1650), a gentleman of Savoie, whose concern for the purity of the language, as determined by the best usage, led him to resist innovations and the invasion of foreign phraseology. His *Remarques sur la Langue Française* served as a guide to his fellow-members of the Academy.

Unhappily he was wholly ignorant of the history of the language. With the erudite Chapelain he mediated between the scholarship and the polite society of the time. But while Vaugelas was almost wholly occupied with the vocabulary and grammar, Chapelain did much to enforce the principles of the classical school upon literary art. The Academy took up the work which the *salons* had begun; its spirit was more robust and masculine than theirs; it was freer from passing fashions, affectations, prettinesses; it leaned on the side of intellect rather than of sentiment.

In what may be called the regulation of French prose the influence of JEAN-LOUIS GUEZ DE BALZAC (1594–1654) was considerable. He had learnt from Malherbe that a literary craftsman should leave nothing to chance, that every effect should be exactly calculated. It was his task to apply to prose the principles which had guided his master in verse. His *Lettres*, of which a first series appeared in 1624, and a second twelve years later, are not the spontaneous intercourse of friend with friend, but rather studious compositions which deal with matters of learning, literature, morals, religion, politics, events, and persons of the time. Their contents are of little importance; Balzac was not an original thinker, but he had the art of arranging his ideas, and of expressing them in chosen words marshalled in ample and sonorous sentences. A certain fire he had, a limited power of imagination, a cultivated judgment, a taste, which suffered from bad workmanship; a true affection for rural life. These hardly furnished him with matter adequate to support his elevated style. His letters were regarded as models of eloquence; but it is eloquence manufactured artificially and applied to

subjects, not proceeding from them. His *Prince*, a treatise on the virtues of kings, with a special reference to Louis XIII., was received coldly. His *Aristippe*, which dealt with the manners and morals of a court, and his *Socrate Chrétien*, a study in ethics and theology, were efforts beyond his powers. His gift to literature was a gift of method and of style; others who worked in marble learned something from his studious modellings in clay.

To regulate thought required an intellect of a different order from that of Balzac, "emperor of orators." It was the task of RENÉ DESCARTES (1596–1650). A child of delicate health, born at La Haye, near Tours, he became, under Jesuit teachers, a precocious student both in languages and science. But truth, not erudition, was the demand and the necessity of his mind. Solitary investigations in mathematics were for a time succeeded by the life of a soldier in the Netherlands and Holland. The stream of thought was flowing, however, underground. Suddenly it emerged to light. In 1619, when the young volunteer was in winter quarters at Neuburg, on the Danube, on a memorable day the first principles of a new philosophical method presented themselves to his intellect, and, as it were, claimed him for their interpreter. After wanderings through various parts of Europe, and a period of studious leisure in Paris, he chose Holland for his place of abode (1629), and though often shifting his residence, little disturbed save by the controversies of philosophy and the orthodox zeal of Dutch theologians, he gave his best hours during twenty years to thought. An invitation from Queen Christina to the Swedish court was accepted in 1649. The change in his habits and the severity of a northern winter proved fatal to the health

which Descartes had carefully cherished; in February of 1650 he was dead.

The mathematical cycle in the development of Descartes' system of thought preceded the metaphysical. His great achievements in analytical geometry, in optics, in physical research, his explanation of the laws of nature, and their application in his theory of the material universe, belong to the history of science. Algebra and geometry led him towards his method in metaphysical speculation. How do all primary truths verify themselves to the human mind? By the fact that an object is clearly and distinctly conceived. The objects of knowledge fall into certain groups or series; in each series there is some simple and dominant element which may be immediately apprehended, and in relation to which the subordinate elements become intelligible. Let us accept nothing on hearsay or authority; let us start with doubt in order to arrive at certitude; let us test the criterion of certitude to the uttermost. There is one fact which I cannot doubt, even in doubting all—I think, and if I think, I exist—"Je pense, donc je suis." No other evidence of this is needed than that our conception is clear and distinct; in this clearness and distinctness we find the principle of certitude. Mind, then, exists, and is known to us as a thinking substance. But the idea of an infinite, perfect Being is also present to our intellect, we, finite, imperfect beings, could not have made it; unmake it we cannot; and in the conception of perfection that of existence is involved. Therefore God exists, and therefore the laws of our consciousness, which are His laws, cannot deceive us. We have seen what mind or spirit signifies—a thinking substance. Reduce our idea of matter to clearness and distinctness, and what do we find? The idea of an

extended substance. Our complex humanity, made up of soul and body, comprises both kinds of substance. But thought and extension have nothing in common; their union can only be conceived as the collocation at a single point of a machine with that which raises it above a mere machine. As for the lower animals, they are no more than automata.

Descartes' *Principia* and his *Meditationes* were written in Latin. The *Discours de la Méthode* (1637) and the later *Traité des Passions* showed how the French language could be adapted to the purposes of the reason. Such eloquence as is found in Descartes is that of thought illuminating style. The theory of the passions anticipates some of the tendencies of modern psychology in its physical investigations. No one, however, affirmed more absolutely than Descartes the freedom of the will—unless, indeed, we regard it as determined by God: it cannot directly control the passions, but it can indirectly modify them with the aid of imagination; it is the supreme mistress of action, however the passions may oppose its fiat. Spiritualist as he was, Descartes was not disposed to be the martyr of thought. Warned by the example of Galileo, he did not desire to expose himself to the dangers attending heretical opinions. He separated the province of faith from that of reason: "I revere our theology," he said; but he held that theology demanded other lights than those of the unaided powers of man. In its own province, he made the reason his absolute guide, and with results which theologians might regard as dangerous.

The spirit of Descartes' work was in harmony with that of his time, and reacted upon literature. He sought for general truths by the light of reason; he made clear-

ness a criterion of truth; he proclaimed man a spirit; he asserted the freedom of the will. The art of the classical period sought also for general truths, and subordinated imagination to reason. It turned away from ingenuities, obscurities, mysteries; it was essentially spiritualist; it represented the crises and heroic victories of the will.

Descartes' opponent, Pierre Gassendi (1592–1655), epicurean in his physics, an empiricist, though an inconsistent one, in philosophy, chose the Latin language as the vehicle for his ideas. A group of writers whose tendencies were towards sensualism or scepticism, viewed him as their master. Chapelle in verse, La Mothe le Vayer in prose, may serve as representatives of art surrendering itself to vulgar pleasures, and thought doubting even its doubts, and finding repose in indifference.

The true successor of Descartes in French philosophy, eminent in the second half of the century, was NICOLAS DE MALEBRANCHE (1638–1715). Soul and body, Descartes had shown, are in their very nature alien each from the other. How then does the soul attain a knowledge of the external world? In God, the absolute substance, are the ideas of all things; in God we behold those ideas which matter could never convey to us, and which we could never ourselves originate; in God we see and know all things. The *Recherche de la Vérité* (1674–75) was admirably written and was widely read. The theologians found it dangerous; and when six years later Malebranche published his *Traité de la Nature et de la Grâce*, characterised briefly and decidedly by Bossuet as "pulchra, nova, falsa," at Bossuet's request both Arnauld and Fénelon attempted to refute "the extravagant Oratorian." His place in the evolution of philosophy lies

between Descartes and Spinoza, who developed and completed the doctrine of Descartes. In the transition from dualism to monism Malebranche served as a mediator.

Religious thought in the seventeenth century, wedded to an austere morality, is expressed by the writers of Port-Royal, and those who were in sympathy with them. They could not follow the flowery path of piety—not the less the narrow path because it was cheerful—pointed out by St. François de Sales. Between nature and grace they saw a deep and wide abyss. In closest connection with them was one man of the highest genius—author of the *Provinciales* and the *Pensées*—whose spiritual history was more dramatic than any miracle-play or morality of the Middle Ages.

✶ Blaise Pascal was born at Clermont-Ferrand in 1623. His father, a president of the Court of Aids at Clermont, a man of intellect and character, guided his education in languages, natural science, and mathematics. The boy's precocity was extraordinary; at sixteen he had written a treatise on Conic Sections, which excited the astonishment of Descartes. But the intensity of study, preying upon a nervous constitution, consumed his health and strength; at an early age he suffered from temporary paralysis. When about twenty-three he fell under the religious influences of certain disciples of St. Cyran, read eagerly in the writings of Jansen and Arnauld, and resolved to live for God alone. But to restore his health he was urged to seek recreation, and by degrees the interests and pleasures of the world took hold upon him; the master of his mind was the sceptical Montaigne; he moved in the mundane society of the capital; and it has been conjectured from hints in his *Discours sur les Passions de l'Amour* that he loved

the sister of his friend, the Duc de Roannez, and had the vain hope of making her his wife.

The spirit of religion, however, lived within his heart, and needed only to be reawakened. The reawakening came in 1654 through the persuasions of his sister, Jacqueline, who had abandoned the world two years previously, and entered the community of Port-Royal. The abbey of Port-Royal, situated some seven or eight miles from Versailles, was presided over by Jacqueline Arnauld, the Mère Angélique, and a brotherhood of solitaries, among whom were several of the Arnauld family, had settled in the valley in the year 1637. With this unvowed brotherhood Pascal, though never actually a solitary, associated himself at the close of 1654. An escape from sudden danger in a carriage accident, and a vision or ecstasy which came to him, co-operated in his conversion. After his death, copies of a fragmentary and passionate writing referring to this period —the so-called "amulet" of Pascal—were found upon his person; its words, "renonciation totale et douce," and "joie, joie, joie, pleurs de joie," express something of his resolution and his rapture.

The affair of the *Provinciales*, and the design of an apology for Christianity with which his *Pensées* are connected, together with certain scientific studies and the deepening passion of religion, make up what remained of Pascal's life. His spirit grew austere, but in his austerity there was an inexpressible joy. Exhausted by his ascetic practices and the inward flame of his soul, Pascal died on August 19, 1662. "May God never leave me" were his last words.

With Pascal's work as a mathematician and a physicist we are not here concerned. In it "we see," writes a

scientific authority, "the strongest marks of a great original genius creating new ideas, and seizing upon, mastering, and pursuing further everything that was fresh and unfamiliar in his time. After the lapse of more than two hundred years, we can still point to much in exact science that is absolutely his; and we can indicate infinitely more which is due to his inspiration."

Jansenism and Jesuitism, opposed as they were, have this in common, that both were movements in that revival of Roman Catholicism which was stimulated by the rivalry of the Protestant Reformation. But the Jesuits sought to win the world to religion by an art of piety, in which a system of accommodation was recognised as a means of drawing worldlings to the Church; the Jansenists held up a severe moral ideal, and humbled human nature in presence of the absolute need and resistless omnipotence of divine grace. Like the Jesuits, but in a different spirit, the Port-Royalists devoted themselves much to the task of education. They honoured classical studies; they honoured science, dialectics, philosophy. Their grammar, logic, geometry were substantial additions to the literature of pedagogy. Isaac le Maistre de Sacy and others translated and annotated the Bible. Their theologian, moralist, and controversialist, Pierre Nicole (1625–95), author of *Essais de Morale* (1671), if not profound or brilliant, was the possessor of learning, good sense, good feeling, and religious faith. Under the influence of St. Cyran, the Port-Royalists were in close sympathy with the teaching of Jansen, Bishop of Ypres; the writings of their great theologian Antoine Arnauld were vigorously anti-Jesuitical. In 1653 five propositions, professedly extracted

from Jansen's *Augustinus*, were condemned by a Papal bull. The insulting triumph of the Jesuits drew Arnauld again into controversy; and on a question concerning divine grace he was condemned in January 1656 by the Sorbonne. "You who are clever and inquiring" (*curieux*), said Arnauld to Pascal, "you ought to do something." Next day was written the first of Pascal's *Lettres à un Provincial*, and on 23rd January it was issued to the public; a second followed within a week; the success was immense. The writer concealed his identity under the pseudonym "Louis de Montalte."

The *Lettres Provinciales* are eighteen in number. The first three and the last three deal with the affair of Arnauld and the Sorbonne, and the questions under discussion as to the nature and the need of divine grace. In the opening letters the clearest intellectual insight and the deepest seriousness of spirit are united with the finest play of irony, and even with the temper of comedy. The supposed Louis de Montalte, seeking theological lights from a doctor of the Sorbonne, finds only how hopelessly divided in opinion are the opponents of Arnauld, and how grotesquely they darken counsel with speech. In the twelve letters intervening between the third and the sixteenth, Pascal takes the offensive, and deploys an incomparably skilful attack on the moral theology of the Jesuits. For the rigid they may have a stricter morality, but for the lax their casuistry supplies a pliable code of morals, which, by the aid of ingenious distinctions, can find excuses for the worst of crimes. With force of logic, with fineness of irony, with energy of moral indignation, with a literary style combining strength and lightness, Pascal presses his irresistible assault. The effect of the "Provincial Letters" was to

carry the discussion of morals and theology before a new court of appeal—not the Sorbonne, but the public intelligence and the unsophisticated conscience of men. To French prose they added a masterpiece and a model.

The subject of the *Provinciales* is in part a thing of the past; the *Pensées* deal with problems which can never lose their interest. Among Pascal's papers were found, after his early death, many fragments which his sister, Madame Périer, and his friends recognised as of rare value; but the editors of the little volume which appeared in 1670, imagining that they could safeguard its orthodoxy, and even amend its style, freely omitted and altered what Pascal had written. It was not until 1844 that a complete and genuine text was established in the edition of M. Faugère. We can hardly hope to arrange the fragments so as to exhibit the design of that apology for Christianity, with which many of them were doubtless connected, but the main outlines of Pascal's body of thought can be clearly discerned.

The intellect of Pascal, so powerful in its grasp of scientific truth, could find by its own researches no certitude in the sphere of philosophy and religion. He had been deeply influenced by the sceptical mind of Montaigne. He found within him a passionate craving for certitude; man is so constituted that he can never be at rest until he rests in knowledge of the truth; but man, as he now exists, is incapable of ascertaining truth; he is weak and miserable, and yet the very consciousness of his misery is evidence of his greatness; "Nature confounds the Pyrrhonist, and reason the dogmatist;" "Man is but a reed, the feeblest of created things, but a reed which thinks." How is this riddle of human

nature to be explained? Only in one way—by a recognition of the truth taught by religion, that human nature is fallen from its true estate, that man is a dethroned king. And how is the dissonance in man's nature to be overcome? Only in one way—through union with God made man; with Jesus Christ, the centre in which alone we find our weakness and the divine strength. Through Christ man is abased and lifted up—abased without despair, and lifted up without pride; in Him all contradictions are reconciled. Such, in brief, is the vital thought from which Pascal's apologetic proceeds. It does not ignore any of the external evidences of Christianity; but the irresistible evidence is that derived from the problem of human nature and the essential needs of the spirit—a problem which religion alone can solve, and needs which Christ alone can satisfy. Pascal's "Thoughts" are those of an eminent intelligence. But they are more than thoughts; they are passionate lyrical cries of a heart which had suffered, and which had found more than consolation; they are the interpretation of the words of his amulet—"Joie, joie, joie, pleurs de joie." The union of the ardour of a poet or a saint with the scientific rigour of a great geometer, of wit and brilliance with a sublime pathos, is among the rarest phenomena in literature; all this and more is found in Pascal.

CHAPTER III

THE DRAMA (MONTCHRESTIEN TO CORNEILLE)

THE classical and Italian drama of the sixteenth century was literary, oratorical, lyrical; it was anything but dramatic. Its last representative, ANTOINE DE MONTCHRESTIEN (1575–1621), a true poet, and one whose life was a series of strange adventures, wrote, like his predecessors, rather for the readers of poetry than for the theatre. With a gift for style, and a lyrical talent, seen not only in the chants of the chorus, but in the general character of his dramas, he had little feeling for life and movement; his personages expound their feelings in admirable verse; they do not act. He attempted a tragedy—*L'Écossaise*—on the story of Mary, Queen of Scots, a theme beyond his powers. In essentials he belonged rather to the past, whose traditions he inherited, than to the future of the stage. But his feeling for grandeur of character, for noble attitudes, for the pathetic founded on admiration, and together with these the firm structure of his verse, seem to warrant one in thinking of him as in some respects a forerunner of Corneille.

At the Hôtel de Bourgogne, until 1599, the Confrères de la Passion still exhibited the mediæval drama. It passed away when their theatre was occupied by the company of Valleran Lecomte, who had in his pay a

dramatist of inexhaustible fertility—ALEXANDRE HARDY (*c.* 1560 to *c.* 1630). During thirty years, from the opening of the seventeenth century onwards, Hardy, author of some six or seven hundred pieces, of which forty-one remain, reigned as master of the stage.[1] A skilful improvisor, devoid of genius, devoid of taste, he is the founder of the French theatre; he first made a true appeal to the people; he first showed a true feeling for theatrical effects. Wherever material suitable for his purposes could be caught at—ancient or modern, French, Italian, or Spanish—Hardy made it his own. Whatever form seemed likely to win the popular favour, this he accepted or divined. The *Astrée* had made pastoral the fashion; Hardy was ready with his pastoral dramas. The Italian and Spanish novels were little tragi-comedies waiting to be dramatised; forthwith Hardy cast them into a theatrical mould. Writing for the people, he was not trammelled by the unities of time and place; the mediæval stage arrangements favoured romantic freedom. In his desire to please a public which demanded animation, action, variety, Hardy allowed romantic incident to predominate over character; hence, though he produced tragedies founded on legendary or historical subjects, his special talent is seen rather in tragi-comedy. He complicated the intrigue, he varied the scenes, he shortened the monologues, he suppressed or reduced the chorus—in a word, the drama in his hands ceased to be oratorical or lyrical, and became at length dramatic. The advance was great; and it was achieved by a hack playwright scrambling for his crusts of bread.

But to dramatic life and movement it was necessary that order, discipline, regulation should be added. The

[1] Or thirty-four pieces, if *Théagène et Cariclée* be reckoned as only one.

rules of the unities were not observed by Hardy—were perhaps unknown to him. But they were known to others. Jean de Schelandre (the pseudonym formed from the letters of his name being Daniel d'Anchères), in his vast drama in two parts, *Tyr et Sidon*, claimed all the freedom of the mysteries in varying the scene, in mingling heroic matter with buffoonery. In the edition of 1628 a preface appears by François Ogier, a learned churchman, maintaining that the modern stage, in accordance with altered circumstances, should maintain its rights to complete imaginative liberty against the authority of the Greeks, who presented their works before different spectators under different conditions. Ogier's protest was without effect. Almost immediately after its appearance the *Sophonisbe* of Jean de Mairet was given, and the classical tragedy of France was inaugurated on a popular stage. In the preface to his pastoral tragi-comedy *Sylvanire*, Mairet in 1631 formulated the doctrine of the unities. The adhesion of Richelieu and the advocacy of Chapelain insured their triumph. The "rules" came to be regarded as the laws of a literary species.

The influence of the Spanish drama, seen in the writings of Rotrou and others, might be supposed to make for freedom. It encouraged romantic inventions and ambitious extravagances of style. Much that is rude and unformed is united with a curiosity for points and laboured ingenuity in the dramatic work of Scudéry, Du Ryer, Tristan l'Hermite. A greater dramatist than these showed how Spanish romance could coalesce with French tragedy in a drama which marks an epoch—the *Cid*; and the *Cid*, calling forth the judgment of the Academy, served to establish the supremacy of the so-called rules of Aristotle.

PIERRE CORNEILLE, son of a legal official, was born at Rouen in 1606. His high promise as a pupil of the Jesuits was not confirmed when he attempted to practise at the bar; he was retiring, and spoke with difficulty. At twenty-three his first dramatic piece, *Mélite*, a comedy, suggested, it is told, by an adventure of his youth, was given with applause in Paris; it glitters with points, and is of a complicated intrigue, but to contemporaries the plot appeared less entangled and the style more natural than they seem to modern readers. The tragi-comedy, *Clitandre*, which followed (1632), was a romantic drama, crowded with extravagant incidents, after the manner of Hardy. In *La Veuve* he returned to the style of *Mélite*, but with less artificial brilliance and more real vivacity; it was published with laudatory verses prefixed, in one of which Scudéry bids the stars retire for the sun has risen. The scene is laid in Paris, and some presentation of contemporary manners is made in *La Galerie du Palais* and *La Place Royale*. It was something to replace the nurse of elder comedy by the soubrette. The attention of Richelieu was attracted to the new dramatic author; he was numbered among the five *garçons poètes* who worked upon the dramatic plans of the Cardinal; but he displeased his patron by his imaginative independence. Providing himself with a convenient excuse, Corneille retired to Rouen.

These early works were ventures among which the poet was groping for his true way. He can hardly be said to have found it in *Médée* (1635), but it was an advance to have attempted tragedy; the grandiose style of Seneca was a challenge to his genius; and in the famous line—

"Dans un si grand revers, que vous reste-t-il? Moi!"

we see the flash of his indomitable pride of will, we hear the sudden thunder of his verse. An acquaintance, M. de Chalon, who had been one of the household of Marie de Médicis, directed Corneille to the Spanish drama. The *Illusion Comique*, the latest of his tentative plays, is a step towards the *Cid*; its plot is fantastical, but in some of the fanfaronades of the braggart Matamore, imported from Spain, are pseudo-heroics which only needed a certain transposition to become the language of chivalric heroism. The piece closes with a lofty eulogy of the French stage.

The sun had indeed risen and the stars might disappear when in the closing days of 1636 the *Cid* was given in Paris at the Théâtre du Marais; the eulogy of the stage was speedily justified by its author. His subject was found by Corneille in a Spanish drama, *Las Mocedades del Cid*, by Guilhem de Castro; the treatment was his own; he reduced the action from that of a chronicle-history to that of a tragedy; he centralised it around the leading personages; he transferred it in its essential causes from the external world of accident to the inner world of character; the critical events are moral events, victories of the soul, triumphs not of fortune but of the will. And thus, though there are epic episodes and lyric outbreaks in the play, the *Cid* definitely fixed, for the first time in France, the type of tragedy. The central tragic strife here is not one of rival houses. Rodrigue, to avenge his father's wrong, has slain the father of his beloved Chimène; Chimène demands from the King the head of her beloved Rodrigue. In the end Rodrigue's valour atones for his offence. The struggle is one of passion with honour or duty; the fortunes of the hero and heroine

are affected by circumstance, but their fate lies in their own high hearts.

The triumph of Corneille's play was immense. The Cardinal, however, did not join in it. Richelieu's intractable poet had glorified Spain at an inconvenient moment; he had offered an apology for the code of honour when edicts had been issued to check the rage of the duel; yet worse, he had not been crushed by the great man's censure. The quarrel of the *Cid*, in which Mairet and Scudéry took an embittered part, was encouraged by Richelieu. He pressed the Academy, of which Corneille was not a member until 1647, for a judgment upon the piece, and at length he was partially satisfied by a pronouncement, drawn up by Chapelain, which condemned its ethics and its violation of dramatic proprieties, yet could not deny the author's genius. Corneille was deeply discouraged, but prepared himself for future victories.

Until 1640 he remained silent. In that illustrious year *Horace* and *Cinna* were presented in rapid succession. From Spain, the land of chivalric honour, the dramatist passed to antique Rome, the mother and the nurse of heroic virtue. In the *Cid* the dramatic conflict is between love and filial duty; in *Horace* it is between love, on the one side, united with the domestic affections, and, on the other, devotion to country. In both plays the inviolable will is arbiter of the contention. The story of the Horatii and Curiatii, as told by Livy, is complicated by the union of the families through love and marriage; but patriotism requires the sacrifice of the tenderer passions. It must be admitted that the interest declines after the third act, and that our sympathies are alienated from the younger Horace by the

murder of a sister; we are required to feel that a private crime, the offence of overstrained patriotism, is obliterated in the glory of the country. In *Cinna* we pass from regal to imperial Rome; the commonwealth is represented by Augustus; a great monarchy is glorified, but in the noblest way, for the highest act of empire is to wield supreme power under the sway of magnanimity, and to remain the master of all self-regarding passions. The conspiracy of Cinna is discovered; it is a prince's part to pardon, and Augustus rises to a higher empire than that of Rome by the conquest of himself. In both *Horace* and *Cinna* there are at times a certain overstrain, an excess of emphasis, a resolve to pursue heroism to all extremities; but the conception of moral grandeur is genuine and lofty; the error of Corneille was the error of an imagination enamoured of the sublime.

But are there not heroisms of religion as pure as those of patriotism? And must we go back to pagan days to find the highest virtue? Or can divine grace effect no miracles above those of the natural will? Corneille gives his answer to such a challenge in the tragedy of *Polyeucte* (1643). It is the story of Christian martyrdom; a homage rendered to absolute self-devotion to the ideal; a canticle intoned in celebration of heavenly grace. Polyeucte, the martyr, sacrifices to his faith not only life, but love; his wife, who, while she knew him imperfectly, gave him an imperfect love, is won both for God and for her husband by his heroism; she is caught away from her tenderness for Sévère into the flame of Polyeucte's devout rapture; and through her Sévère himself is elevated to an unexpected magnanimity. The family, the country, the monarchy, religion—these in turn were honoured by the genius of Corneille. He

had lifted the drama from a form of loose diversion to be a great art; he had recreated it as that noblest pastime whose function is to exercise and invigorate the soul.

The transition from *Polyeucte* to *Le Menteur*, of the same year, is among the most surprising in literature.[1] From the most elevated of tragedies we pass to a comedy, which, while not belonging to the great comedy of character, is charmingly gay. We expect no grave moralities here, nor do we find them. The play is a free and original adaptation from a work of the Spanish dramatist Alarcon, but in Corneille's hands it becomes characteristically French. Young Dorante, the liar, invents his fictions through an irresistible genius for romancing. His indignant father may justly ask, Has he a heart? Is he a gentleman? But how can a youth with such a pretty wit resist the fascination of his own lies? He is sufficiently punished by the fact that they do not assist, but rather trouble, the course of his love adventure, and we demand no further poetical justice. In Corneille's art, tragedy had defined itself, and comedy was free to be purely comic; but it is also literary—light, yet solid in structure; easy, yet exact in style. The *Suite du Menteur*, founded on a comedy by Lope de Vega, has a curious attraction of its own, half-fantastic as it is, and half-realistic; yet it has shared the fate of all continuations, and could not attain the popularity of its predecessor. It lacks gaiety; the liar has sunk into a rascal, and we can hardly lend credence to the amendment in his mendacious habit when he applies the art of dissimulation to generous purposes.

These are the masterpieces of Corneille. Already in

[1] *Polyeucte* may possibly be as early as 1641.

Pompée, although its date is that of *Polyeucte*, while the great dramatist is present throughout, he is not always present at his best. It should not surprise us that Corneille preferred Lucan to Virgil. Something of the over-emphasis of the *Pharsalia*, his original, has entered into the play; but the pomp of the verse is no vulgar pomp. A graver fault is the want of a dramatic centre for the action, which tends too much towards the epic. Pompey is the presiding power of the tragedy; his spirit dominates the lesser characters; but he does not appear in person. The political interest develops somewhat to the subordination of the personal interest. Corneille's unhappy theory of later years, that love is unworthy of a place in high tragedy, save as an episode, is here exemplified in the passion of Cæsar for Cleopatra; but, in truth, love is too sovereign a power to admit of its being tagged to tragedy as an ornament.

Until 1636 Corneille was seeking his way. From 1636 to 1644 his genius soared on steady pinions. During the eight years that followed he triumphed, but he also faltered. *Rodogune* (1644), which he preferred to all his other plays, is certainly, by virtue of the enormity of the characters, the violence of the passions, the vastness of its crimes, the most romantic of his tragedies; it is constructed with the most skilful industry; from scene to scene the emotion is intensified and heightened until the great fifth act is reached; but if by incomparable audacity the dramatist attains the ideal, it is an ideal of horror. *Théodore*, a second play of martyrdom, fell far below *Polyeucte*. *Heraclius* is obscure through the complication of its intrigue. *Don Sanche d'Aragon*, a romantic tragi-comedy, is less admirable as a whole than in the more brilliant scenes. In the his-

torical drama *Nicomède* (1651), side by side with tragic solemnities appears matter of a familiar kind. It was the last great effort of its author's genius. The failure of *Pertharite*, in 1652, led to the withdrawal of Corneille from the theatre during seven years. He completed during his seclusion a rendering into verse of the *Imitation of Jesus Christ*. When he returned to the stage it was with enfeebled powers, which were overstrained by the effort of his will; yet he could still write noble lines, and in the tragedy-ballet of *Psyché*, in which Quinault and Molière were his collaborators, the most charming verses are those of Corneille. His young rival Racine spoke to the hearts of a generation less heroic and swayed by tenderer passion, and the old man resented the change. Domestic sorrows were added to the grief of ill success in his art. Living simply, his means were narrow for his needs. The last ten years of his life were years of silence. He died in 1684, at the age of seventy-eight.

The drama of Corneille deals with what is extraordinary, but in what is extraordinary it seeks for truth. He finds the marvellous in the triumphs of the human will. His great inventive powers were applied to creating situations for the manifestation of heroic energy. History attracted him, because a basis of fact seemed to justify what otherwise could not be accepted as probable. Great personages suited his purpose, because they can deploy their powers on the amplest scale. His characters, men and women, act not through blind, instinctive passion, but with deliberate and intelligent force; they reason, and too often with casuistical subtlety, about their emotions. At length he came to glorify the will apart from its aims and ends, when tending

even to crime, or acting, as it were, in the void. He thought much of the principles of his art, and embodied his conclusions in critical dissertations and studies of his own works. He accepted the rule of the unities of place and time (of which at first he was ignorant) as far as his themes permitted, as far as the rules served to concentrate action and secure verisimilitude. His mastery in verse of a masculine eloquence is unsurpassed; his dialogue of rapid statement and swift reply is like a combat with Roman short swords; in memorable single lines he explodes, as it were, a vast charge of latent energy, and effects a clearance for the progress of his action. His faults, like his virtues, are great; and though faults and virtues may be travestied, both are in reality alike inimitable.

Alone among Corneille's dramatic rivals, if they deserve that name—Du Ryer, Tristan, Scudéry, Boisrobert, and others—JEAN ROTROU (1610–50) had the magnanimity to render homage to the master of his art. While still a boy he read Sophocles, and resolved that he would live for the dramatic art. His facility was great, and he had the faults of a facile writer, who started on his career at the age of nineteen. He could not easily submit to the regulation of the classical drama, and squandered his talents in extravagant tragi-comedies; but his work grew sounder and stronger towards the close. *Saint Genest* (1645), which is derived, but in no servile fashion, from Lope de Vega, recalls *Polyeucte;* an actor of the time of Diocletian, in performing the part of a Christian martyr, is penetrated by the heroic passion which he represents, confesses his faith, and receives its crown in martyrdom. The tragi-comedy *Don Bernard de Cabrère* and the tragedy *Venceslas* of

the following year exhibit the romantic and passionate sides of Rotrou's genius. The intemperate yet noble Ladislas has rashly and in error slain his brother; he is condemned to death by his father Venceslas, King of Poland, and he accepts his doom. The situation is such as Corneille might have imagined; but Rotrou's young hero in the end is pardoned and receives the kingdom. If their careless construction and unequal style in general forbade the dramas of Rotrou to hold the stage, they remained as a store from which greater artists than he could draw their material. His death was noble: the plague having broken out at Dreux, he hastened from Paris to the stricken town, disregarding all affectionate warnings, there to perform his duty as a magistrate; within a few days the inhabitants followed Rotrou's coffin to the parish church.

THOMAS CORNEILLE, the faithful and tender brother of "le grand Corneille," and his successor in the Academy, belongs to a younger generation. He was born in 1625, and did not die until near the close of the first decade of the eighteenth century. As an industrious playwright he imitated his brother's manner, and reproduced his situations with a feebler hand. Many of his dramas are of Spanish origin, comic imbroglios, tragic extravagances; they rather diverted dramatic art from its true way than aided its advance. Perhaps for this reason they were the more popular. His *Timocrate* (1656), drawn from the romance of *Cléopâtre*, and itself a romance written for the stage, had a success rarely equalled during the century. The hero is at once the enemy and the lover of the Queen of Argos; under one name he besieges her, under another he repels his own attack; he is hated and

adored, the conquered and the conqueror. The languors of conventional love and the plaintive accents of conventional grief suited the powers of the younger Corneille. His *Ariane* (1672) presents a heroine, Ariadne, abandoned by Theseus, who reminds us of one of Racine's women, drawn with less certain lines and fainter colours. In *Le Comte d'Essex* history is transformed to a romance. Perhaps the greatest glory of Thomas Corneille is that his reception as an Academician became the occasion for a just and eloquent tribute to the genius of his brother uttered by Racine, when the bitterness of rivalry was forgotten and the offences of Racine's earlier years were nobly repaired.

CHAPTER IV

SOCIETY AND PUBLIC LIFE IN LETTERS

BEFORE noticing the theories of classical poetry in the writings of its master critic, Boileau, we must glance at certain writers who belonged rather to the world of public life and of society than to the world of art, but who became each a master in literary craft, as it were, by an irresistible instinct. Memoirs, maxims, epistolary correspondence, the novel, in their hands took a distinguished place in the hierarchy of literary art.

FRANÇOIS VI., DUC DE LA ROCHEFOUCAULD, Prince de Marsillac, was born in 1613, of one of the greatest families of France. His life is divided into two periods —one of passionate activity, when with romantic ardour he threw himself into the struggles of the Fronde, only to be foiled and disillusioned; and the other of bitter reflection, consoled by certain social successes, loyal friendships, and an unique literary distinction. His *Maximes* are the brief confession of his experience of life, an utterance of the pessimism of an aristocratic spirit, moulded into a form proper to the little world of the *salon*—each maxim a drop of the attar not of roses but of some more poignant and bitterly aromatic blossom. In the circle of Mme. de Sablé, now an elderly *précieuse*, a circle half-Epicurean, half-Jansenist, frivolously serious and morosely gay, the

composition of maxims and "sentences" became a fashion. Those of La Rochefoucauld were submitted to her as to an oracle; five years were given to shaping a tiny volume; fifteen years to rehandling and polishing every phrase. They are like a collection of medals struck in honour of the conquests of cynicism. The first surreptitious edition, printed in Holland in 1664, was followed by an authorised edition in 1665; the number of maxims, at first 317, rose finally in 1678 to 504; some were omitted; many were reduced to the extreme of concision; under the influence of Mme. de la Fayette, in the later texts the indictment of humanity was slightly attenuated. "Il m'a donné de l'esprit," said Mme. de la Fayette, "mais j'ai réformé son cœur."

The motto of the book, "Our virtues are commonly vices in disguise," expresses its central idea. La Rochefoucauld does not absolutely deny disinterested goodness; there may be some such instinctive virtue lying below all passions which submit to be analysed; he does not consider the love of God, the parental or the filial affections; but wherever he applies analysis, it is to reduce each apparently disinterested feeling to self-love. "We all have strength enough to endure the misfortunes of another;" "When vices desert us, we flatter ourselves with the belief that it is we who desert them;" "With true love it is as with apparitions—every one talks of them, but few persons have seen them;" "Virtues lose themselves in self-interest as rivers lose themselves in the sea;" "In the adversity of our best friends we always find something which does not displease us"—such are the moral comments on life graven in ineffaceable lines by La Rochefoucauld. He is not a philosophic thinker, but he is a penetrating and remorseless critic, who re-

mains at one fixed point of view; self-interest is assuredly a large factor in human conduct, and he exposes much that is real in the heart of man; much also that is not universally true was true of the world in which he had moved; whether we accept or reject his doctrine, we are instructed by a statement so implacable and so precise of the case against human nature as he saw it. Pitiless he was not himself; perhaps his artistic instinct led him to exclude concessions which would have marred the unity of his conception; possibly his vanity co-operated in producing phrases which live and circulate by virtue of the shock they communicate to our self-esteem. The merit of his *Maximes* as examples of style—a style which may be described as lapidary—is incomparable; it is impossible to say more, or to say it more adequately, in little; but one wearies in the end of the monotony of an idea unalterably applied, of unqualified brilliance, of unrelieved concision; we anticipate our surprise, and its purpose is defeated. Traces of preciosity are found in some of the earliest sentences; that infirmity was soon overcome by La Rochefoucauld, and his utterances become as clear and as hard as diamond.

He died at the age of sixty-seven, in the arms of Bossuet. His *Memoires*,[1] relating to the period of the Fronde, are written with an air of studied historical coldness, which presents a striking contrast to the brilliant vivacity of Retz.

The most interesting figure of the Fronde, its portrait-painter, its analyst, its historian, is CARDINAL DE RETZ (1614–1679). Italian by his family, and Italian in some features of his character, he had, on a scale of grandeur, the very genius of conspiracy. When his first work,

[1] Ed. 1662, surreptitious and incomplete; complete ed., 1868–1884.

La Conjuration de Fiesque, was read by Richelieu, the judgment which that great statesman pronounced was penetrating — "Voilà un dangereux esprit." Low of stature, ugly, ill-made, short-sighted, Retz played the part of a gallant and a duellist. Never had any one less vocation for the spiritual duties of an ecclesiastic; but, being a churchman, he would be an illustrious actor on the ecclesiastical stage. There was something demoniac in his audacity, and with the spirit of turbulence and intrigue was united a certain power of self-restraint. When fallen, he still tried to be magnificent, though in disgrace: he would resign his archbishopric, pay his enormous debts, resign his cardinalate, exhibit himself as the hero in misfortune. "Having lived as a Catiline," said Voltaire, "he lived as an Atticus." In retirement, as his adventurous life drew towards its close, he wrote, at the request of Madame de Caumartin, those Memoirs which remained unpublished until 1717, and which have insured him a place in literature only second to Saint-Simon.

It was an age remarkable for its memoirs; those of Mlle. de Montpensier, of Mme. de Motteville, of Bussy-Rabutin are only a few of many. The *Mémoires* of Retz far surpass the rest not only in their historical interest, but in their literary excellence. Arranging facts and dates so that he might superbly figure in the drama designed for future generations, he falsifies the literal truth of things; but he lays bare the inner truth of politics, of life, of character, with incomparable mastery. He exposes the disorder of his conduct in early years with little scruple. The origins of the Fronde are expounded in pages of profound sagacity. His narrative has all the impetuosity, all the warmth and

hues of life, all the tumult and rumour of action; he paints, but in painting he explains; he touches the hidden springs of passion; his portraits of contemporaries are not more vivid in their colours than they are searching in their psychology: and in his style there is that negligent grandeur which belongs rather to the days of Louis XIII. than to the age of his successor, when language grew more exact for the intelligence, but lost much of its passion and untamed energy.

The epistolary art, in which the art itself is nature, may be said to have reached perfection, with scarcely an historical development, in the letters of MME. DE SÉVIGNÉ. The letters of Balzac are rhetorical exercises; those of Voiture are often, to use a word of Shakespeare, "heavy lightness, serious vanity." Mme. de Sévigné entered into the gains of a cultivated society, in which graceful converse had become a necessity of existence. She wrote delightfully, because she conveyed herself into her letters, and because she conversed freely and naturally by means of her pen. Marie de Rabutin-Chantal, born in 1626, deprived of both parents in her earliest years, was carefully trained in literary studies — Latin, Italian, French — under the superintendence of her uncle, "le bien bon," the Abbé de Coulanges. Among her teachers were the scholar Ménage and the poet Chapelain. Married at eighteen to an unworthy husband, the Marquis Henri de Sévigné, she was left at twenty-five a widow with two children, the daughter whom she loved with excess of devotion, and a son, who received from his mother a calmer affection. She saw the life of the court, she was acquainted with eminent writers, she frequented the

Hôtel de Rambouillet (retaining from it a touch of preciosity, "one superfluous ribbon," says Nisard, "in a simple and elegant toilet"), she knew and loved the country and its rural joys, she read with excellent judgment and eager delight the great books of past and present times.

When her daughter, "the prettiest girl in France," was married in 1669 to M. de Grignan, soon to be Lieutenant-General of Provence, Mme. de Sévigné, desiring to be constantly one with her, at least in thought, transferred into letters her whole life from day to day, together with much of the social life of the time during a period of nearly thirty years. She allowed her pen to trot, throwing the reins, as she says, upon its neck; but if her letters are improvisations, they are improvisations regulated by an exquisite artistic instinct. Her imagination is alert in discovering, combining, and presenting the happiest meanings of reality. She is gay, witty, ironical, malicious, and all this without a trace of malignity; amiable rather than passionate, except in the ardour of her maternal devotion, which sometimes proved oppressive to a daughter who, though not unloving, loved with a temperate heart; faithful to friends, loyal to those who had fallen into misfortune, but neither sentimental nor romantic, nor disposed to the generosities of a universal humanity; a woman of spirit, energy, and good sense; capable of serious reflection, though not of profound thought; endowed with an exquisite sense of the power of words, and, indeed, the creator of a literary style. While her interests were in the main of a mundane kind, she was in sympathy with Port-Royal; admired the writings of Pascal, and deeply reverenced Nicole. Domestic affairs, business

(concern for her children having involved her in financial troubles), the aristocratic life of Paris and Versailles, literature, the pleasures and tedium of the country, the dulness or gaiety of a health-resort, the rise and fall of those in power, the petty intrigues and spites and follies of the day—these, and much besides, enter into Mme. de Sévigné's records, records made upon the moment, with all the animation of an immediate impression, but remaining with us as one of the chief documents for the social history of the second half of the seventeenth century. In April 1696 Mme. de Sévigné died.

Beside the letters addressed to her daughter are others—far fewer in number—to her cousin Bussy-Rabutin, to her cousin Mme. de Coulanges, to Pomponne, and other correspondents. In Bussy's *Mémoires et Correspondance* (1696–97) first appeared certain of her letters; a collection, very defective and inaccurate, was published in 1726; eight years later the first portion of an authorised text was issued under the sanction of the writer's grand-daughter; gradually the material was recovered, until it became of vast extent; even since the appearance of the edition among the *Grands Écrivains de la France* two volumes of *Lettres inédites* have been published.

Among the other letter-writers of the period, perhaps the most distinguished were Mme. de Sévigné's old and attached friend Mme. de la Fayette, and the woman of supreme authority with the King, Mme. de Maintenon. A just view of Mme. de Maintenon's character has been long obscured by the letters forged under her name by La Beaumelle, and by the bitter hostility of Saint-Simon. On a basis of ardour and sensibility

she built up a character of unalterable reason and good sense. Her letters are not creations of genius, unless practical wisdom and integrity of purpose be forms of genius. She does not gossip delightfully; at times she may seem a little hard or dry; but her reason is really guided by human kindness. "Her style," wrote a high authority, Döllinger, "is clear, terse, refined, often sententious; her business letters are patterns of simplicity and pregnant brevity. They might be characterised as womanly yet manly, so well do they combine the warmth and depth of womanly feeling with the strength and lucidity of a masculine mind." The foundation of Saint-Cyr, for the education of girls well-born but poor, was the object of her constant solicitude; there she put out her talents as a teacher and guide of youth to the best interest; there she found play for her best affections: "C'est le lieu," she said, "de délices pour moi."

The friend of Madame de Sévigné, the truest woman whom La Rochefoucauld had ever known, MADAME DE LA FAYETTE was the author of two historical works, of which one is exquisite—a memorial of her friend the Duchess of Orleans, and of two—perhaps three—romances, the latest of which, in the order of chronology, is the masterpiece of seventeenth-century fiction. Marie de la Vergne, born in 1634, a pupil of Ménage, married at twenty-one to M. de la Fayette, became the trusted companion of the bright and gracious Henrietta of England. It is not that part of Madame's life, when she acted as intermediary between Louis XIV. and her brother, Charles II., that is recorded by her friend: it is the history of her heart. Nothing is more touching in its simplicity than the narrative of Madame's last

moments; it serves as the best possible comment on the pathetic Funeral Oration of Bossuet. We have no grounds for asserting that the married life of Madame de la Fayette was unhappy, except through the inadequacy of a husband whose best qualities seem to have been of a negative kind. During the fifteen years which preceded the death of La Rochefoucauld her friendship for him was the centre of her existence. She seemed to bear about with her some secret grief; something remained veiled from other friends than he, and they named her *le Brouillard*. She outlived her friend by thirteen years, and during ten was widowed. In 1693 she died.

Her earliest novel, *La Princesse de Montpensier* (1662), a tale of the days of the Valois and of St. Bartholomew, is remarkable for its truthful pictures of the manners of the court, its rendering of natural and unexaggerated feeling, and for the fact that it treats of married life, occupying itself with such themes as have been dealt with in many of its modern successors. The *Zayde*, of eight years later, was written in collaboration with Segrais. It is in *La Princesse de Clèves* (1678) that the genius and the heart of Madame de la Fayette find a perfect expression. The Princess, married to a husband who loves her devotedly, and whom she honours, but whose feelings she cannot return, is tempted by the brilliant Duc de Nemours and by the weakness of her own passion, to infidelity. She resolves to confide her struggle to her husband, and seek in him a protector against herself. The hard confession is made, but a grievous and inevitable change has passed over their lives. Believing himself deceived, M. de Clèves is seized by a fever and dies, not without the consolation of learning his error. Nemours renews his vows and entreaties; the

Princess refuses his hand, and atones for her error in cloistered seclusion. The tale has lost none of its beauty and pathos after a lapse of two centuries. Does it reveal the hidden grief of the writer's life? And was her friend, the Duc de la Rochefoucauld, delivered from his gout and more than a score of years, transformed by Madame de la Fayette into the foiled lover of her tale?

CHAPTER V

BOILEAU AND LA FONTAINE

THE great name in criticism of the second half of the seventeenth century is that of Boileau. But one of whom Boileau spoke harshly, a soldier, a man of the world, the friend of Ninon de l'Enclos, a sceptical Epicurean, an amateur in letters, Saint-Évremond (1613–1703), among his various writings, aided the cause of criticism by the intuition which he had of what is excellent, by a fineness of judgment as far removed from mere licence as from the pedantry of rules. Fallen into disfavour with the King, Saint-Évremond was received into the literary society of London. His criticism is that of a fastidious taste, of balance and moderation, guided by tradition, yet open to new views if they approved themselves to his culture and good sense. Had his studies been more serious, had his feelings been more generous and ardent, had his moral sense been less shallow, he might have made important contributions to literature. As it was, to be a man of the world was his trade, to be a writer was only an admirable foible.

NICOLAS BOILEAU, named DESPRÉAUX, from a field (*pré*) of his father's property at Crosne, was born in Paris, 1636, son of the registrar of the Grand'Chambre du Palais. His choice of a profession lay between the

Church and that with which his father was connected —the law; but though he made some study of theology, and was called to the bar, his inclination for literature could not be resisted. His whole life, indeed, was that of a man of letters—upright, honourable, serious, dignified, simple; generous to the friends whose genius he could justly applaud; merciless to books and authors condemned by his reason, his good sense, his excellent judgment. He was allied by an ardent admiration to Racine, and less intimately to Molière, La Fontaine, and Chapelle; Jansenist through his religious sympathies, and closely attached to the venerable Arnauld; appointed historiographer to the King (1677) together with Racine; an Academician by the King's desire, notwithstanding the opposition of his literary enemies. In his elder years his great position of authority in the world of letters was assured, but he suffered from infirmities of body, and from an increasing severity of temper. In 1711 he died, bequeathing a large sum of money to the poor.

Boileau's literary career falls into three periods—the first, militant and destructive, in which he waged successful war against all that seemed to him false and despicable in art; the second, reconstructive, in which he declared the doctrine of what may be termed literary rationalism, and legislated for the French Parnassus; the third, dating from his appointment as historiographer, a period of comparative repose and, to some extent, of decline, but one in which the principles of his literary faith were maintained and pressed to new conclusions. His writings include twelve satires (of which the ninth, "À son Esprit," is the chief masterpiece); twelve epistles (that to Racine being pre-

eminent); the literary-didactic poem, *L'Art Poétique;* a heroi-comical epic, *Le Lutrin;* miscellaneous shorter poems (among which may be noted the admirable epitaph on Arnauld, and an unhappy ode, *Sur la Prise de Namur,* 1693); and various critical studies in prose, his Lucianic dialogue *Les Héros de Roman,* satirising the extravagant novels not yet dismissed to oblivion, and his somewhat truculent *Réflexions sur Longin* being specially deserving of attention. The satires preceded in date the epistles; of the former, the first nine belong to the years 1660–67; the first nine of the epistles to the years 1669–77; three satires and three epistles may be described as belated. The year 1674 is memorable as that in which were published *L'Art Poétique* and the first four *chants* of *Le Lutrin.*

The genius of Boileau was in a high degree intellectual, animated by ideas; but it is an error to suppose that a sensuous element is absent from his verse. It is verse of the classical school, firm and clear, but it addresses the ear with a studied harmony, and what Boileau saw he could render into exact, definite, and vivid expression. His imagination was not in a large sense creative; he was wholly lacking in tenderness and sensibility; his feeling for external nature was no more than that of a Parisian bourgeois who enjoys for a day the repose of the fields; but for Paris itself, its various aspects, its life, its types, its manners, he had the eye and the precise rendering of a realist in art; his faithful objective touch is like that of a Dutch painter. As a moralist, he is not searching or profound; he saw too little of the inner world of the heart, and knew too imperfectly its agitations. When, however, he deals with literature—and a just judgment in letters may almost be

called an element in morals—all his penetration and power become apparent.

To clear the ground for the new school of nature, truth and reason was Boileau's first task. It was a task which called for courage and skill. The public taste was still uncertain. Laboured and lifeless epics like Chapelain's *La Pucelle*, petty ingenuities in metre like those of Cotin, violence and over-emphasis, extravagances of sentiment, faded preciosities, inane pastoralisms, gross or vulgar burlesques, tragedies languorous and insipid, lyrics of pretended passion, affectations from the degenerate Italian literature, super-subtleties from Spain—these had still their votaries. And the conduct of life and characters of men of letters were often unworthy of the vocation they professed. "La haine d'un sot livre" was an inspiration for Boileau, as it afterwards was for our English satirist Pope; and he felt deeply that dignity of art is connected with dignity of character and rectitude of life—"Le vers se sent toujours des bassesses de cœur." He struck at the follies and affectations of the world of letters, and he struck with force: it was a needful duty, and one most effectively performed. Certain of the Epistles, which are written with less pitiless severity and with a more accomplished mastery of verse, continue the work of the Satires. From Horace he derived much, something from Juvenal, and something from his predecessor Regnier; but he had not the lightness nor the *bonhomie* of Horace, nor his easy and amiable wisdom.

In the *Art Poétique* Boileau is constructive; he exhibits the true doctrine of literature, as he conceived it. Granted genius, fire, imagination—the gifts of heaven—what should be the self-imposed discipline of a poet? Above all,

the cultivation of that power which distinguishes false from true, and aids every other faculty—the reason. "Nothing," declares Boileau, "is beautiful save what is true;" nature is the model, the aim and end of art; reason and good sense discern reality; they test the fidelity of the artistic imitation of nature; they alone can vouch for the correspondence of the idea with its object, and the adequacy of the expression to the idea. What is permanent and universal in literature lives by the aid of no fashion of the day, but by virtue of its truth to nature. And hence is derived the authority of the ancient classics, which have been tried by time and have endured; these we do not accept as tyrants, but we may safely follow as guides.

To study nature is, however, before all else to study man — that is, human nature — and to distinguish in human nature what is universal and abiding from what is transitory and accidental; we cannot be expected to discover things absolutely new; it suffices to give to what is true a perfect expression. Unhappily, human nature, as understood by Boileau, included little beyond the court and the town. Unhappily his appreciation of classical literature was defective; to justify as true and natural the mythology of Greece he has to regard it as a body of symbols or a moral allegory. Unhappily his survey of literature was too narrow to include the truths and the splendours of Mediæval poetry and art. For historical truth, indeed, he had little sense; seeking for what is permanent and universal, he had little regard for local colour and the truth of manners. To secure assent from contemporary minds truth must assume what they take to be its image, and a Greek or Roman on the stage must not shock the demand for verisimili-

tude made by the courtly imagination of the days of Louis Quatorze. Art which fails to please is no longer art.

To the workmanship, the technique of poetry, Boileau attaches a high importance. Its several species—idyl, elegy, ode, sonnet, epigram, rondeau, ballade, madrigal, satire, epic, tragedy, comedy—are separated from one another by fixed boundaries, and each is subject to its own rules; but genius, on occasion, may transcend those rules, and snatch an unauthorised grace. It is difficult to understand why from among the *genres* of poetry Boileau omitted the fable; perhaps he did not regard its form, now in verse and now in prose, as defined; possibly he was insensible of the perfection to which the fable in verse had been carried by La Fontaine. The fourth *chant* of the *Art Poétique* is remarkable for its lofty conception of the position of the poet; its counsels express the dignity of the writer's own literary life. He has been charged not only with cruelty as a satirist, but with the baseness of a flatterer of the great. It would be more just to notice the honourable independence which he maintained, notwithstanding his poetical homage to the King, which was an inevitable requisition. Boileau's influence as a critic of literature can hardly be overrated; it has much in common with the influence of Pope on English literature—beneficial as regards his own time, somewhat restrictive and even tyrannical upon later generations.

Le Lutrin (completed in 1683) is not a burlesque which degrades a noble theme, but, like Pope's far more admirable *Rape of the Lock*, a heroi-comic poem humorously exalting humble matter of the day. It tells of the combats of ecclesiastics respecting the position

of a lectern, combats in which the books of a neighbouring publisher serve as formidable projectiles. The scene is in the Sainte-Chapelle and the Palais de Justice. Boileau's gift for the vivid presentation of visible detail, and his skill in versification, served him here better than did his choice of a subject. On the whole, we think of him less as a poet than as the classical guardian and legislator of poetry. He was an emancipator by directing art towards reason and truth; when larger interpretations of truth and reason than his became possible, his influence acted unfavourably as a constraint.

All that Boileau lacked as a poet was possessed by the most easy and natural of the singers of his time—one whose art is like nature in its freedom, while yet it never wrongs the delicate bounds of art. JEAN DE LA FONTAINE was born in 1621 at Château-Thierry, in Champagne, son of the "maître des eaux et forêts." His education was less of a scholastic kind than an education derived from books read for his own pleasure, and especially from observation or reverie among the woods and fields, with their population of bird, beast, and insect, so dear to his heart and his imagination. Slipping away from theology and law, he passed ten years, from twenty-three to thirty-three, in seeming indolence, a "bon garçon," irreclaimably wayward as regards worldly affairs, but already drawing in to himself all that fed his genius, all sights and sounds of nature, all the lore of old poets, story-tellers, translators, and already practising his art of verse. Nothing that was not natural to him, and wholly to his liking, would he or could he do; but happily he was born to write perfect verses, and the labour of the artist was with him an instinct and a delight. He allowed himself to be married to a pretty

girl of fifteen, and presently forgot that he had a wife and child, drifted away, and agreed in 1659 to a division of goods; but his carelessness and egoism were without a touch of malignity, those of an overgrown child rather than of a man.

In 1654 he published a translation of the *Eunuch* of Terence of small worth, and not long after was favoured with the patronage of Fouquet, the superintendant of finance. To him La Fontaine presented his *Adonis*, a narrative poem, graceful, picturesque, harmonious, expressing a delicate feeling for external nature rarely to be found in poetry of the time, and reviving some of the bright Renaissance sense of antiquity. The genius of France is united in La Fontaine's writings with the genius of Greece. But the verses written by command for Fouquet are laboured and ineffective. His ill-constructed and unfinished *Songe de Vaux*, partly in prose, partly in verse, was designed to celebrate his patron's Château de Vaux.

Far happier than this is the poem in dialogue *Clymène*, a dramatic fantasy, in which Apollo on Mount Parnassus learns by the aid of the Muses the loves of Acante (La Fontaine) and Clymène (Madame X . . .), a rural beauty, whom the god had seen wandering on the banks of Hippocrene. On the fall of his magnificent patron La Fontaine did not desert him, pleading in his *Élégie aux Nymphes de Vaux* on behalf of the disgraced minister. As a consequence, the poet retired for a time from Paris to banishment at Limoges. But in 1664 he is again in Paris or at Château-Thierry, his native place, where the Duchesse de Bouillon, niece of Mazarin, young, gay, pleasure-loving, bestowed on him a kind protection. His tedious paraphrase of *Psyché*, and the poem *Quinquina*,

in which he celebrates the recovery from illness of the Duchess, were performances of duty and gratitude rather than of native impulse; but the tendencies of her salon, restrained neither by the proprieties of the classical doctrine in literature nor those of religious strictness, may have encouraged him to the production of his *Contes*.

In Paris, from 1661 to 1664 joyous meetings took place in Boileau's rooms in the Rue du Colombier of a distinguished group, which included Molière, Chapelle, Racine, and La Fontaine. La Fontaine, the *bonhomme*, who escaped from the toil of conversation which did not interest him in shy or indolent taciturnity, could be a charming talker with companions of his choice. Probably to Boileau's urgency is due the first original publication of La Fontaine, a little volume of *Nouvelles en Vers* (1664–1665), containing the *Joconde*, a tale from Ariosto, and a comic story versified from Boccaccio. Almost immediately there followed a collection of ten *Contes*, with the author's name upon the title-page, and at various later dates were published added tales, until five parts completed the series. The success was great, but great also was the scandal, for the *bonhomme*, drawing from Boccaccio, the Heptameron, the Cent Nouvelles nouvelles, Rabelais, Petronius, Athenæus, and other sources, had exhibited no more regard for decency than that which bestows the graces of lightness, brightness, wit, and gaiety upon indecency. His unabashed apology was that the artistic laws of the *conte* obliged him to decline the laws of modesty; and among those who applauded his tales were the Duchess de Bouillon and Mme. de Sévigné. It is indeed impossible not to applaud their skill in rapid and easy narrative, and the grace, freedom, and spontaneity of the verse.

The first six books of the *Fables* appeared in 1668 ; the next five in two parts, in 1678 and 1679 ; the twelfth and last book in 1694. When the *Psyché* was published, soon after the first group of the *Fables*, the prose and verse were placed in a graceful setting, which tells of the converse of the author with his friends Boileau, Racine, and Molière (or possibly Chapelle) in the midst of the unfinished gardens of Versailles, where the author of *Psyché*, named happily Polyphile (for he loved many things, and among them his friends), will read his romance for his literary comrades.

> "*J'aime le jeu, l'amour, les livres, la musique,*
> *La ville et la campagne, enfin tout : il n'est rien*
> *Qui ne me soit souverain bien*
> *Jusqu'aux sombres plaisirs d'un cœur mélancolique.*"

Some of his friends before long had passed away, but others came to fill their places. For many years he was cared for and caressed by the amiable and cultivated Mme. de Sablière, and when she dismissed other acquaintances she still kept "her dog, her cat, and her La Fontaine." The Academy would have opened its doors to him sooner than to Boileau, but the King would not have it so, and he was admitted (1684) only when he had promised Louis XIV. henceforth to be *sage*. When Mme. de Sablière died, Hervart, maître des requêtes, one day offered La Fontaine the hospitality of his splendid house. "I was on my way there," replied the poet. After a season of conversion, in which he expressed penitence for his "infamous book" of *Contes*, the *bonhomme* tranquilly died in April 1693. "He is so simple," said his nurse, "that God will not have courage to damn him." "He was the most sincere and candid soul," wrote his friend Maucroix, who had

been intimate with him for more than fifty years, "that I have ever known; never a disguise; I don't know that he spoke an untruth in all his life."

All that is best in the genius of La Fontaine may be found in his *Fables*. The comedies in which he collaborated, the *Captivité de Saint Malc*, written on the suggestion of the Port-Royalists, the miscellaneous poems, though some of these are admirable, even the *Contes*, exhibit only a fragment of his mind; in the *Fables* the play of his faculties is exquisite, and is complete. His imagination was unfitted for large and sustained creation; it operated most happily in a narrow compass. The *Fables*, however, contain much in little; they unite an element of drama and of lyric with narrative; they give scope to his feeling for nature, and to his gift for the observation of human character and society; they form, as he himself has said—

> "*Une ample comédie à cents actes divers*
> *Et dont la scène est l'univers.*"

He had not to invent his subjects; he found them in all the fabulists who had preceded him—Greek, Latin, Oriental, elder French writers—"j'en lis qui sont du Nord et qui sont du Midi;" but he may be said to have recreated the species. From an apologue, tending to an express moral, he converted the fable into a *conte*, in which narrative, description, observation, satire, dialogue have an independent value, and the moral is little more than an accident. This is especially true of the midmost portion of the collection—Books vii.–ix.—which appeared ten years after the earliest group. He does not impose new and great ideas on the reader; he does not interpret the deepest passions; he takes life as he sees it, as an en-

tertaining comedy, touched at times with serious thought, with pathos, even with melancholy, but in the main a comedy, which teaches us to smile at the vanities, the follies, the egoisms of mankind, and teaches us at the same time something of tenderness and pity for all that is gentle or weak. His morality is amiable and somewhat epicurean, a morality of indulgence, of moderation, of good sense. His eye for what is characteristic and picturespue in animal life is infallible ; but his humanised wild creatures are also a playful, humorous, ironical presentation of mankind and of the society of his own day, from the grand monarch to the bourgeois or the lackey.

La Fontaine's language escapes from the limitations of the classical school of the seventeenth century ; his manifold reading in elder French literature enriched his vocabulary ; he seems to light by instinct upon the most exact and happiest word. Yet we know that the perfection of his art was attained only as the result of untiring diligence ; indolent and careless as he was in worldly affairs, he was an indefatigable craftsman in poetry. His verse is as free as it is fine ; it can accomplish whatever it intends ; now it is light and swift, but when needful it can be grave and even magnificent :

> "*Aurait-il imprimé sur le front des étoiles*
> *Ce que la nuit des temps enferme dans ses voiles?*"

It is verse which depends on no mechanical rules imposed from without ; its life and movement come from within, and the lines vary, like a breeze straying among blossoms, with every stress or relaxation of the writer's mood. While La Fontaine derives much from antiquity, he may be regarded as incarnating more than any other

writer of his century the genius of France, exquisite in the proportion of his feeling and the expression of feeling to its source and cause. If we do not name him, with some of his admirers, "the French Homer," we may at least describe him, with Nisard, as a second Montaigne, "mais plus doux, plus aimable, plus naïf que le premier," and with all the charm of verse superadded.

CHAPTER VI

COMEDY AND TRAGEDY—MOLIÈRE—RACINE

I

THE history of comedy, from Larivey to Molière, is one of arrested development, followed by hasty and ill-regulated growth. During the first twenty-five years of the seventeenth century, comedy can hardly be said to have existed; whatever tended to beauty or elevation, took the form of tragi-comedy or pastoral; what was rude and popular became a farce. From the farce Molière's early work takes its origin, but of the repertory of his predecessors little survives. Much, indeed, in these performances was left to the improvisation of the burlesque actors. Gros-Guillaume, Gaultier-Garguille, Turlupin, Tabarin, rejoiced the heart of the populace; but the *farces tabariniques* can hardly be dignified with the name of literature.

In 1632 the comedy of intrigue was advanced by Mairet in his *Galanteries du Duc d'Ossone.* The genius of Rotrou, follower though he was of Plautus, tended towards the tragic; if he is really gay, it is in *La Sœur* (1645), a bright tangle of extravagant incidents. For Rotrou the drama of Italy supplied material; the way to the Spanish drama was opened by d'Ouville, the only writer of the time devoted specially to comedy, in

L'Esprit Follet (1641); once opened, it became a common highway. Scarron added to his Spanish originals in *Jodelet* and *Don Japhet d'Arménie* his own burlesque humour. The comedy of contemporary manners appears with grace and charm in Corneille's early plays; the comedy of character, in his admirable *Le Menteur*. Saint-Évremond satirised literary affectations in *La Comédie des Académistes;* these and other follies of the time are presented with spirit in Desmaret's remarkable comedy, *Les Visionnaires*. If we add, for sake of its study of the peasant in the character of Mathieu Gareau, the farcical *Pédant Joué* of Cyrano, we have named the most notable comedies of the years which preceded *Les Précieuses Ridicules*.

Their general character is extravagance of resources in the plot, extravagance of conception in the characters. Yet in both intrigue and characters there is a certain monotony. The same incidents, romantic and humorous, are variously mingled to produce the imbroglio; the same typical characters—the braggart, the parasite, the pedant, the extravagant poet, the amorous old man, the designing woman, the knavish valet, the garrulous nurse—play their mirthful parts. If the types are studied from real life rather than adopted from Italian or Spanish models, they are exaggerated to absurdity. Corneille alone is distinguished by delicacy of imagination and the finer touch of a dexterous artist.

JEAN-BAPTISTE POQUELIN, who, when connected with the stage, named himself MOLIÈRE, was born in January 1622, in Paris, the son of a prosperous upholsterer, Jean Poquelin, and Marie Cressé, his wife. Educated at the Collège de Clermont, he had among his fellow-pupils the

Prince de Conti, Chapelle, the future poet Hesnault, the future traveller Bernier. There seems to be no sufficient reason to doubt that he and some of his friends afterwards received lessons in philosophy from Gassendi, whose influence must have tended to loosen him from the traditional doctrines, and to encourage independence of thought. A translation by Molière of the great poem of Lucretius has been lost, but a possible citation from it appears in the second act of the *Misanthrope*. Legal studies followed those of philosophy. But Molière had other ends in view than either those of an advocate or of the hereditary office of upholsterer to the King. In 1643, at the age of twenty-one, he decided to throw in his lot with the theatrical company in which Madeleine Béjart and her brothers were leading members. The *Illustre Théâtre* was constituted, but Paris looked askance at the illustrious actors; debt, imprisonment, and release through friendly aid, formed the net result of Molière's first experiment.

The troupe decided at the close of 1645 or in the early days of the following year to try their fortune in the provinces. It is needless to follow in detail their movements during twelve years — twelve years fruitful in experience for one who observed life with keenest eyes, years of toil, in which the foundations of his art were laid. At Lyons, probably in 1655, possibly in 1653, a comedy, founded on the Italian of Nicolo Barbieri, *L'Étourdi*, saw the light, and Molière revealed himself as a poet. Young Lélie, the *Étourdi*, is enamoured of the beautiful Célie, whom the merchant Trufaldin, old and rich, has purchased from corsairs. Lélie's valet Mascarille, who is the life of the play, invents stratagem on stratagem to aid the lover, and is for ever foiled by his

master's indiscretions, until the inevitable happy dénouement arrives. The romantic intrigue is conventional; the charm is in the vivacity and colour of the style. In 1656 *Le Dépit Amoureux* was given with applause at Béziers; much is derived from the Italian of Secchi, something perhaps from Terence; the tender scenes of lovers' quarrels and lovers' reconciliation, contrasting with the franker comedy of the loves of waiting-maid and valet, still live, if the rest of the play be little remembered.

The years of apprenticeship were over when, in 1658, Molière and his company once more in Paris presented, by command, before the King, Corneille's *Nicomède*, and, leave being granted, gave his farce in the Italian style, the *Docteur Amoureux*, before pleased spectators. The company was now the troupe of Monsieur, the King's brother, with the Petit-Bourbon as theatre, and there, in November 1659, was enacted Molière's first satiric play on contemporary manners, *Les Précieuses Ridicules*. We do not need the legendary old man crying from the pit "Courage, Molière! voilà la bonne comédie" to assure us that the comic stage possessed at length a masterpiece. The dramatist had himself known the précieuses of the provinces; through them he might with less danger exhibit the follies of the Hôtel de Rambouillet and the *ruelles* of the capital. The good bourgeois Gorgibus is induced by his niece and daughter, two précieuses, to establish himself in Paris. Their aspirant lovers, unversed in the affectations of the salon, are slighted and repelled; in revenge they employ their valets, Mascarille and Jodelet, to play the parts of men of fashion and of taste. The exposure and confusion of the ladies, with an indignant rebuke from Gorgibus,

close the piece. It was a farce raised to the dignity of comedy. Molière's triumph was the triumph of good sense.

After a success in *Sganarelle* (1660), a broad comedy of vulgar jealousy, and a decided check—the only one in his dramatic career—in the somewhat colourless tragi-comedy *Don Garcie de Navarre* (1661), Molière found a theme, suggested by the Adelphi of Terence, which was happily suited to his genius. *L'École des Maris* (1661) contrasts two methods of education—one suspicious and severe, the other wisely indulgent. Two brothers, Ariste and Sganarelle, seek the hands of their wards, the orphan sisters Isabelle and Léonor; the amiable Ariste, aided by the good sense of a gay soubrette, is rewarded with happiness; the vexatious Sganarelle is put to confusion. The drama is a plea, expressing the writer's personal thoughts, for nature and for freedom. The comedy of manners is here replaced by the comedy of character. Its success suggested to Fouquet that Molière might contribute to the amusement of the King at the fêtes of the Château de Vaux; in fifteen days the dramatist had his bright improvisation *Les Fâcheux* ready, a series of character sketches in scenes rather than a comedy. The King smiled approval, and, it was whispered, hinted to Molière that another bore might with advantage be added to the collection—the sportsman whose talk shall be of sport. At Fontainebleau he duly appeared before his Majesty, and unkind spectators recognised a portrait of the Marquis de Soyecourt.

Next February (1662) Molière, aged forty, was married to the actress Armande Béjart, whose age was half his own—a disastrous union, which caused him inexpressible anxiety and unhappiness. In *L'École des Femmes*

of the same year he is wiser than he had shown himself in actual life. Arnolphe would train a model wife from childhood by the method of jealous seclusion and in infantile ignorance; but love, in the person of young Horace, finds out a way. There is pathos in the anguish of Arnolphe; yet it is not the order of nature that middle-aged folks should practise perverting arts upon innocent affections. The charming Agnès belongs of right to Horace, and the over-wise, and therefore foolish, Arnolphe must quit the scene with his despairing cry. Some matter of offence was found by the devout in Molière's play; it was the opening of a long campaign; the *précieuses*, the dainty gentle-folk, the critical disciples of Aristotle, the rival comedians, were up in arms. Molière for the occasion ignored the devout; upon the others he made brilliant reprisals in *La Critique de l'École des Femmes* (1663) and *L'Impromptu de Versailles* (1663).

Among those who war against nature and human happiness, not the least dangerous foe is the religious hypocrite. On May 12, 1664, Molière presented before the King the first three acts of his great character-comedy *Tartufe*. Instantly Anne of Austria and the King's confessor, now Archbishop of Paris, set to work; the public performance of "The Hypocrite" was inhibited; a savage pamphlet was directed against its author by the curé of Saint-Barthélemy. Private representations, however, were given; *Tartufe*, in five acts, was played in November in presence of the great Condé. In 1665 Molière's company was named the servants of the King; two years later a verbal permission was granted for the public performance of the play. It appeared under the title of *L'Imposteur;* the

victory seemed won, when again, and without delay, the blow fell; by order of the President, M. de Lamoignon, the theatre was closed. Molière bore up courageously. The King was besieging Lille; Molière despatched two of his comrades to the camp, declaring that if the Tartufes of France should carry all before them he must cease to write. The King was friendly, but the Archbishop fulminated threats of excommunication against any one who should even read the play. At length in 1669, when circumstances were more favourable, Louis XIV. granted the desired permission; in its proper name Molière's play obtained complete freedom. Bourdaloue might still pronounce condemnation; Bossuet might draw terrible morals from the author's sudden death; an actor, armed with the sword of the comic spirit, had proved victorious. And yet the theologians were not wholly wrong; the tendency of Molière's teaching, like that of Rabelais and like that of Montaigne, is to detach morals from religion, to vindicate whatever is natural, to regard good sense and good feeling as sufficient guides of conduct.

There is an accent of indignation in the play; the follies of men and women may be subjects of sport; base egoism assuming the garb of religion deserves a lash that draws the blood. Is it no act of natural piety to defend the household against the designs of greedy and sensual imposture; no service to society to quicken the penetration of those who may be made the dupes of selfish craft? While Orgon and his mother are besotted by the gross pretensions of the hypocrite, while the young people contend for the honest joy of life, the voice of philosophic wisdom is heard through the sagacious Cléante, and that of frank good sense through

the waiting-maid, Dorine. Suddenly a providence, not divine but human, intervenes in the representative of the monarch and the law, and the criminal at the moment of triumph is captured in his own snare.

When the affair of *Tartufe* was in its first tangle, Molière produced a kind of dramatic counterpart—*Don Juan, ou le Festin de Pierre* (1665). In Don Juan—whose valet Sganarelle is the faithful critic of his master—the dramatist presented one whose cynical incredulity and scorn of all religion are united with the most complete moral licence; but hypocrisy is the fashion of the day, and Don Juan in sheer effrontery will invest himself for an hour in the robe of a penitent. Atheist and libertine as he is, there is a certain glamour of reckless courage about the figure of his hero, recreated by Molière from a favourite model of Spanish origin. His comedy, while a vigorous study of character, is touched with the light of romance.

These are masterpieces; but neither *Tartufe* nor *Don Juan* expresses so much of the mind of Molière as does *Le Misanthrope* (1666). His private griefs, his public warfare, had doubtless a little hardened and a little embittered his spirit. In many respects it is a sorry world; and yet we must keep on terms with it. The misanthropist Alceste is nobly fanatical on behalf of sincerity and rectitude. How does his sincerity serve the world or serve himself? And he, too, has his dose of human folly, for is he not enamoured of a heartless coquette? Philinte is accommodating, and accepts the world for what it is; and yet, we might ask, is there not a more settled misanthropy in such cynical acquiescence than there is in the intractable virtue of Alceste? Alone of Molière's plays, *Le Misanthrope* has that Shakespearean

obscurity which leaves it open to various interpretations. It is idle to try to discover actual originals for the characters. But we may remember that when Alceste cried to Célimène, "C'est pour mes péchés que je vous aime," the actors who stood face to face were Molière and the wife whom he now met only on the stage.

Molière's genius could achieve nothing higher than *Tartufe* and the *Misanthrope*. His powers suffered no decline, but he did not again put them to such strenuous uses. In 1668 the brilliant fantasy of *Amphitryon*, freely derived from Plautus, was succeeded by an admirable comedy in prose, *Georges Dandin*, in which the folly of unequal marriage between the substantial farmer and the fine lady is mocked with bitter gaiety. Before the year closed Molière, continuing to write in prose, returned to Plautus, and surpassed him in *L'Avare*. To be rich and miserly is in itself a form of fatuity; but Harpagon is not only miserly but amorous, as far as a ruling passion will admit one of subordinate influence. *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* (1670), a lesson of good sense to those who suffer from the social ambition to rise above their proper rank, is wholly original; it mounts in the close from comedy to the extravagance of farce, and perhaps in the uproarious laughter of the play we may discover a touch of effort or even of spasm. The operatic *Psyché* (1671) is memorable as having combined the talents of Molière, Corneille, and Quinault, with the added musical gifts of Lulli.

In *Les Femmes Savantes* (1672) Molière returned to an early theme, with variations suited to the times. The Hôtel de Rambouillet was closed; the new tribe of *précieuses* had learnt the Cartesian philosophy, affected the sciences, were patronesses of physics, astronomy, anatomy. Some-

thing of the old romantic follies survived, and mingled strangely with the pretensions to science and the pedantries of erudition. Trissotin (doubtless a portrait in caricature from the Abbé Cotin) is the Tartufe of spurious culture; Vadius (a possible satire of Ménage) is a pedant, arrogant and brutal. Shall the charming Henriette be sacrificed to gratify her mother's domineering temper and the base designs of an impostor? The forces are arrayed on either side; the varieties of learned and elegant folly in woman are finely distinguished; of the opposite party are Chrysale, the bourgeois father with his rude common-sense; the sage Ariste; the faithful servant, Martine, whose grammar may be faulty, but whose wit is sound and clear; and Henriette herself, the adorable, whom to know is more of a liberal education than to have explored all the Greek and Latin masters of Vadius and Trissotin. The final issue of the encounter between good sense, good nature, reason and folly, pedantry and pride, cannot be uncertain.

Le Malade Imaginaire was written when Molière was suffering from illness; but his energy remained indomitable. The comedy continued that long polemic against the medical faculty which he had sustained in *L'Amour Médecin*, *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac*, and other plays. Molière had little faith in any art which professes to mend nature; the physicians were the impostors of a learned hygiene. It was the dramatist's last jest at the profession. While playing the part of Argan on February 17, 1673, the "Malade Imaginaire" fell dying on the stage; he forced a laugh, but could not continue his part; at ten o'clock he was no more. Through the exertions of his widow a religious funeral was permitted

to an actor who had died unfortified by the rites of the Church.

Many admirable though slighter pieces served as the relief of his mind between the effort of his chief works. In all, gaiety and good sense interpenetrate each other. Kindly natured and generous, Molière, a great observer, who looked through the deeds of men, was often taciturn—*le contemplateur* of Boileau—and seemingly self-absorbed. Like many persons of artistic temperament, he loved splendour of life; but he was liberal in his largess to those who claimed his help. He brought comedy to nature, and made it a study of human life. His warfare was against all that is unreal and unnatural. He preached the worth of human happiness, good sense, moderation, humorous tolerance. He does not indulge in heroics, and yet there is heroism in his courageous outlook upon things. The disciple of Molière cannot idealise the world into a scene of fairyland; he will conceive man as far from perfect, perhaps as far from perfectible; but the world is our habitation; let us make it a cheerful one with the aid of a sane temper and an energetic will. As a writer, Molière is not free from faults; but his defects of style are like the accidents that happen within the bounds of a wide empire. His stature is not diminished when he is placed among the greatest European figures. "I read some pieces of Molière's every year," said Goethe, "just as from time to time I contemplate the engravings after the great Italian masters. For we little men are not able to retain the greatness of such things within ourselves."

To study the contemporaries and immediate successors of Molière in comedy — Thomas Corneille, Quinault,

Montfleury, Boursault, Baron—would be to show how his genius dominates that of all his fellows. The reader may well take this fact for granted.[1]

II

With the close of the sanguinary follies of the Fronde, with the inauguration of the personal government of Louis XIV. and the triumph of an absolute monarchy, a period of social and political reorganisation began. The court became the centre for literature ; to please courtiers and great ladies was to secure prosperity and fame ; the arts of peace were magnificently ordered ; the conditions were favourable to ideals of grace and beauty rather than of proud sublimity ; to isolate one's self was impossible ; literature became the pastime of a cultivated society ; it might be a trivial pastime, but in fitting hands it might become a noble pleasure.

The easier part was chosen by PHILIPPE QUINAULT, the more arduous by Racine. Quinault (1635–88) had given his first comedy as early as 1653 ; in tragedies and tragi-comedies which followed, he heaped up melodramatic incidents, but could not base them upon characters strongly conceived, or passion truly felt. A frigid sentimentality replaces passion, and this is expressed with languorous monotony. Love reigns supreme in his theatre ; but love, as interpreted by Quinault, is a kind of dulcet gallantry. His tragedy *Astrate* (1663) was not the less popular because its sentiment was in the conventional mode. One comedy by Quinault, *La Mère*

[1] An excellent guide will be found in Victor Fournel's *Le Théâtre au xvii. Siècle, La Comédie.*

Coquette, is happy in its plot and in its easy style. But he did not find his true direction until he declined—or should we rather say, until he rose?—into the librettist for the operas of Lulli. His lyric gifts were considerable; he could manipulate his light and fragile material with extraordinary skill. The tests of truth and reality were not applied to such verse; if it was decorative, the listeners were satisfied. The opera flourished, and literature suffered through its pseudo-poetics. But the libretti of Quinault and the ballets of Benserade are representative of the time, and in his mythological or chivalric inventions Benserade sometimes could attain to the poetry of graceful fantasy.

Quinault retired from the regular drama almost at the moment when Racine appeared. Born at La Ferté-Milon in 1639, son of a procureur and comptroller of salt, JEAN RACINE lost both parents while a child. His widowed grandmother retired to Port-Royal in 1649. After six years' schooling at Beauvais the boy passed into the tutelage of the Jansenists, and among his instructors was the devout and learned Nicole. Solitude, religion, the abbey woods, Virgil, Sophocles, Euripides — these were the powers that fostered his genius. Already he was experimenting in verse. At nineteen he continued his studies in Paris, where the little abbé Le Vasseur, who knew the *salons* and haunted the theatre, introduced him to mundane pleasures. Racine's sensitive, mobile character could easily adapt itself to the world. His ode on the marriage of the King, *La Nymphe de la Seine*, corrected by Chapelain (for to bring Tritons into a river was highly improper), won him a gift of louis d'or. But might not the world corrupt the young Port-Royalist's innocence? The company of ladies of the Marais

Theatre and that of La Fontaine might not tend to edification. So thought Racine's aunts; and, with the expectation that he would take orders, he was exiled to Uzès, where his uncle was vicar-general, and where the nephew could study the *Summa* of theology, but also the Odyssey, the odes of Pindar, Petrarch, and the pretty damsels who prayed in the cathedral church.

In 1663 he was again in Paris, was present at royal levées, and in Boileau's chambers renewed his acquaintance with La Fontaine, and became a companion of Molière. His vocation was not that of an ecclesiastic. Two dramatic works of earlier date are lost; his first piece that appeared before the public, *La Thébaïde*, was presented in 1664 by Molière's company. It is a tragedy written in discipleship to Rotrou and to Corneille, and the pupil was rather an imitator of Corneille's infirmities than of his excellences. *Alexandre* followed towards the close of the ensuing year—a feeble play, in which the mannered gallantry of the time was liberally transferred to the kings of India and their Macedonian conqueror. But amorous sighs were the mode, and there was a young grand monarch who might discover himself in the person of the magnanimous hero. The success was great, though Saint-Évremond pronounced his censures, and Corneille found ridiculous the trophies erected upon the imagined ruins of his own. Discontented with the performers at the Palais-Royal, Racine offered his play to the Hôtel de Bourgogne; Molière's best actress seceded to the rival house. Racine's ambition may excuse, but cannot justify an injurious act; a breach between the friends was inevitable.

Boileau remained now, as ever, loyal—loyal for warning as well as for encouragement. Nicole, the former

guide of Racine's studies, in his *Visionnaires*, had spoken of dramatic poets as "public poisoners." The reproach was taken to himself by Racine, and in two letters, written with some of the spirit of the *Provinciales*, he turned his wit against his Jansenist friends. Thanks to Boileau's wise and firm counsel, the second of these remained unpublished.

Madame de Sévigné was the devoted admirer of the great Corneille, but when she witnessed his young rival's *Andromaque* she yielded to its pathos six reluctant tears. On its first appearance in 1667 a triumph almost equal to that of the *Cid* was secured. Never before had grace and passion, art and nature, ideality and truth, been so united in the theatre of France. Racine did not seek for novelty in the choice of a subject; Euripides had made Andromache familiar to the Greek stage. The invention of Racine was of a subtler kind than that which manufactures incidents and constructs a plot. Like Raphael in the art of painting, he could accept a well-known theme and renew it by the finest processes of genius. He did not need an extraordinary action, or personages of giant proportions; the simpler the intrigue, the better could he concentrate the interest on the states of a soul; the more truly and deeply human the characters, the more apt were they for betraying the history of a passion. In its purity of outline, its harmony of proportions, *Andromaque* was Greek; in its sentiment, it gained something from Christian culture; in its manners, there was a certain reflection of the Versailles of Louis XIV. It was at once classical and modern, and there was no discordance between qualities which had been rendered, to borrow a word from Shakespeare, "harmonious charmingly." With *Andromaque* French

tragedy ceased to be oratorical, and became essentially poetic.

Adversaries there were, such as success calls forth; the irritable poet retorted with epigrams of a kind which multiply and perpetuate enmities. His true reprisal was another work, *Britannicus*, establishing his fame in another province of tragedy. But before *Britannicus* appeared he had turned aside, as if his genius needed recreation, to produce the comedy, or farce, or buffoonery, or badinage, or mockery (for it is all these), *Les Plaideurs*. It may be that his failure in a lawsuit moved Racine to have his jest at the gentlemen of the Palais; he and his friends of the tavern of the *Mouton Blanc*—Furetière among them—may have put their wits together to devise material for laughter, and discussed how far *The Wasps* of Aristophanes could be acclimatised in Paris. At first the burlesque was meant for an Italian troupe, but Scaramouche left the town, and something more carefully developed would be expected at the Hôtel de Bourgogne. The play was received with hisses, but Molière did not fear to laugh at what was comic, whether he laughed according to the rules or against them. A month later, at a court performance, Louis XIV. laughed loudly; the courtiers quickly discovered Racine's wit, and the laughter was echoed by all loyal citizens. In truth, there is laughing matter in the play; the professional enthusiasm of Dandin, the judge, who wears his robe and cap even in bed, the rage and rapture of litigation in Chicanneau and the Countess, have in them something of nature beneath the caricature; in the buffoonery there is a certain extravagant grace.

Les Plaideurs, however, was only an interlude between graver efforts. *Britannicus* (1669), founded on the

Annals of Tacitus, exhibits with masterly power Nero's adolescence in crime; the young tiger has grace and strength, but the instinct of blood needs only to be awakened within him. Agrippine is a superb incarnation of womanly ambition, a Roman sister of Athalie. The play was at first coldly received; Corneille and his cabal did not spare their censures. In a preface Racine struck back, but afterwards repented of his bitter words and withdrew them. The critics, as he says in a later preface, disappeared; the piece remained. His conception of tragedy in contrast with that of Corneille was defined by him in memorable words—what is natural should be sought rather than what is extraordinary; the action should be simple, "chargée de peu de matière"; it should advance gradually towards the close, sustained by the interests, sentiments, and passions of the personages.

The sprightly Henrietta of England, Duchess of Orleans, seems to have conceived the idea of bringing the rivalry between the old dramatic poet and his young successor to a decisive test. She proposed to each, without the other's knowledge, a subject for a tragedy—the parting, for reasons of State policy, of two royal lovers, Titus, Emperor of Rome, and Bérénice, Queen of Palestine. Perhaps Henrietta mischievously thought of the relations of her friend Marie de Mancini with Louis XIV. The plays appeared almost simultaneously in November 1670; Corneille's was before long withdrawn; Racine's *Bérénice*, in which the penetrating voice of La Champmeslé interpreted the sorrows of the heroine, obtained a triumph. Yet the elegiac subject is hardly suited to tragedy; a situation rather than an action is presented; it needed all the poet's resources to prevent the scenes from being stationary. In Bérénice there is

a suavity in grief which gives a grace to her passion; the play, if not a drama of power, is the most charming of elegiac tragedies.

Bajazet (1672), a tragedy of the seraglio, although the rôle of the hero is feeble, has virile qualities. The fury of Eastern passion, a love resembling hate, is represented in the Sultana Roxane. In the Vizier Acomat, deliberate in craft, intrepid in danger, Racine proved, as he proved by his Nero and his Joad, that he was not always doomed to fail in his characters of men. The historical events were comparatively recent; but in the perspective of the theatre, distance may produce the idealising effect of time. The story was perhaps found by Racine in *Floridon*, a tale by Segrais. The heroine of *Mithridate* (1673), the noble daughter of Ephesus, Monime, queen and slave, is an ideal of womanly love, chastity, fidelity, sacrifice; gentle, submissive, and yet capable of lofty courage. The play unites the passions of romance with a study of large political interests hardly surpassed by Corneille. The cabal which gathered head against *Bajazet* could only whisper its malignities when *Mithridate* appeared.

Iphigénie, which is freely imitated from Euripides, was given at the fêtes of Versailles in the summer of 1674. The French Iphigenia is enamoured of Achilles, and death means for her not only departure from the joy of youth and the light of the sun, but the loss of love. Here, as elsewhere, Racine complicates the moral situation with cross and counter loves: Ériphile is created to be the jealous rival of Iphigénie, and to be her substitute in the sacrifice of death. The ingenious transpositions, which were necessary to adapt a Greek play to Versailles in the second half of the seventeenth century, called forth

hostile criticisms. Through miserable intrigues a competing *Iphigénie*, the work of Le Clerc and Coras, was produced in the spring of 1675; it was born dead, and five days later it was buried.

The hostilities culminated two years later. It is commonly said that Racine wrote in the conventional and courtly taste of his own day. In reality his presentation of tragic passions in their terror and their truth shocked the aristocratic proprieties which were the mode. He was an innovator, and his audacity at once conquered and repelled. It was known that Racine was engaged on *Phèdre*. The Duchesse de Bouillon and her brother the Duc de Nevers were arbiters of elegance in literature, and decreed that it should fail. A rival play on the same subject was ordered from Pradon; and to insure her victory the Duchess, at a cost of fifteen thousand livres, as Boileau declares, engaged the front seats of two theatres for six successive evenings—the one to be packed with applauding spectators, the other to exhibit empty benches, diversified with creatures who could hiss. Nothing could dignify Pradon's play, as nothing could really degrade that of Racine. But Racine was in the highest degree sensitive, and such a desperate plot against his fame might well make him pause and reflect.

Phèdre, like *Iphigénie*, is a new creation from Euripides. Its singular beauty has been accurately defined as a mingling of horror and compassion, of terror and curiosity. It is less a drama than one great part, and that part consists of a diseased state of the soul, a morbid conflict of emotions, so that the play becomes overmuch a study in the pathology of passion. The greatness of the rôle of the heroine constitutes the infirmity of the play as a whole; the other characters seem to exist only for the

sake of deploying the inward struggle of which Phèdre is the victim. Love and jealousy rage within her; remorse follows, for something of Christian sentiment is conveyed by Racine into his classical fable. Never had his power as a psychologist in art been so wonderfully exhibited; yet he had elsewhere attained more completely the ideal of the drama. In the succession of his profane masterpieces we may say of the last that it is lesser than the first and greater. *Phèdre* lacks the balance and proportion of *Andromaque;* but never had Racine exhibited the tempest and ravage of passion in a woman's soul on so great a scale or with force so terrible.

The cabal might make him pause; his own play, profoundly moralised as it was, might cause him to consider. Events of the day, crimes of passion, adulteries, poisonings, nameless horrors, might agitate his spirit. Had he not fed the full-blown passions of the time? What if Nicole's word that playwrights were public poisoners should be true? Probably various causes operated on the mobile spirit of Racine; certainly the Christian, of Jansenist education, who had slumbered within him, now awakened. He resolved to quit the world and adopt the Carthusian habit. The advice of his confessor was that he should regulate his life by marriage. Racine yielded, and found his contentment in a wife who was ignorant of his plays, and in children whose inclinations and training were religious. The penitent was happy in his household, happy also in his reconciliation with Nicole and Arnauld. To Boileau he remained attached. And he did not renounce the court. Was not the King the anointed vicegerent of God, who could not be too much honoured? He accepted, with Boileau as fellow-labourer,

the position of the King's historiographer, and endeavoured to fulfil its duties.

Twelve years after his withdrawal from the theatre, Racine, at the request of Madame de Maintenon, composed his Biblical tragedy of *Esther* (1688–89) for her cherished schoolgirls at Saint-Cyr. The subject was not unaptly chosen—a prudent and devout Esther now helped to guide the fortunes of France, and she was surrounded at Saint-Cyr by her chorus of young daughters of Sion. *Esther* was rendered by the pupils, with graceful splendours, before the King, and the delight was great. The confidante of the Persian Queen indeed forgot her words; at Racine's hasty complaint the young actress wept, and the poet, weeping with her, wiped away her tears.

Esther is a melodious play, exquisite in its refined style and delicate versification; but the characters are faintly drawn. Its novelty lay in its lyrical movements and in the poetical uses of its finely-imagined spectacle. Madame de Maintenon or her directors feared that the excitement and ambitions of another play in costume might derange the spirits of her girls, and when *Athalie* was recited at Versailles, in January 1691, it was little of an event; the play passed almost unnoticed. A noisy reception, indeed, would have been no fitting tribute to its solemn beauty. All Racine's religious feeling, all his domestic tenderness are united in *Athalie* with his matured feeling for Greek art. The great protagonist is the Divine Being; Providence replaces the fate of the ancient drama. A child (for Racine was still an innovator in the French theatre) was the centre of the action; the interests were political, or rather national, in the highest sense; the events were, as formerly, the developments of inward character; but events and characters were under the presiding care of

God. The tragedy is lyrical, not merely through the chorus, which expresses common emotions of devout joy and fear, indignation, praise, and rapture. The chorus is less developed here, and its chants are less impressive than in *Esther*. There is, however, a lyrism, personal and modern, in the prophetic inspiration of the High Priest, and Racine anticipated that his boldness in presenting this might be censured by his contemporaries. The unity of place, which had been disregarded in *Esther*, is here preserved ; the scene is the temple at Jerusalem ; and by its impressive grandeur, and the awful associations of the place, the spectacle may be said to take part in the action of the play. Perhaps it would be no exaggeration to assert that grandeur and beauty are nowhere else so united in French dramatic art as in *Athalie ;* perhaps it might truly be described as flawless in majesty and grace.

A light disfavour of the King saddened, and perhaps hastened, the close of Racine's life. Port-Royal was regarded as a centre of rebellious heresy ; and Racine's piety to his early masters was humble and devout. He had further offended by drawing up a memorandum on the sufferings of the French people resulting from the wars. Madame de Maintenon assured him that the cloud would pass ; but the favour of death, accepted with tranquillity, came before the returning favour of the poet's master. He died in April 1699, soon after he had entered his sixtieth year.

The highest distinction of the drama of Racine is its truth to nature—truth, that is, in its interpretation and rendering of human passion. Historical accuracy and local colour concerned him as far as they were needful with his courtly spectators for verisimilitude. The fluc-

tuations of passion he studies to most advantage in his characters of women. Love, in all its varieties, from the passion of Roxane or Phèdre to the pure devotion of Bérénice, Iphigénie, or Monime; maternal tenderness or the tenderness of the foster-mother (Andromaque, Clytemnestre, Josabeth); female ambition (Agrippine, Athalie)—these are the themes of his exposition. His style has been justly characterised as a continual creation; its audacity underlies its suavity; its miracles are accomplished with the simplest means. His vocabulary is singularly small, yet with such a vocabulary he can attain the rarest effects. From sustained dignity he can pass suddenly, when the need arises, to the most direct familiarity. The music of his verse is seldom rich or sonorous; it is at once a pure vehicle for the idea and a delicate caress to the senses.

CHAPTER VII

BOSSUET AND THE PREACHERS—FÉNELON

I

"A MAN set under authority"—these words, better than any other, define Bossuet. Above him was God, represented in things spiritual by the Catholic Church, in things temporal by the French monarchy; below him were the faithful confided to his charge, and those who would lead the faithful astray from the path of obedience and tradition. Duty to what was above him, duty to those placed under him, made up the whole of Bossuet's life. To maintain, to defend, to extend the tradition he had received, was the first of duties. All his powers as an orator, a controversialist, an educator were directed to this object. He wrote and spoke to dominate the intellects of men and to subdue their wills, not for the sake of personal power, but for the truth as he had received it from the Church and from the monarchy.

JACQUES-BÉNIGNE BOSSUET was born in 1627, at Dijon, of a middle-class family, distinguished in the magistracy. In his education, pursued with resolute ardour, the two traditions of Hellenism and Hebraism were fused together: Homer and Virgil were much to him; but the Bible, above all, nourished his imagination,

his conscience, and his will. The celebrity of his scholarship and the flatteries of Parisian *salons* did not divert him from his course. At twenty-five he was a priest and a doctor of the Sorbonne. Six years were spent at Metz, a city afflicted by the presence of Protestants and Jews, where Bossuet fortified himself with theological studies, preached, panegyrised the saints, and confuted heretics. His fame drew him to Paris, where, during ten years, his sermons were among the great events of the time. In 1669 he was named Bishop of Condom, but, being appointed preceptor to the Dauphin, he resigned his bishopric, and devoted himself to forming the mind of a pupil, indolent and dull, who might one day be the vicegerent of God for his country. Bishop of Meaux in 1681, he opened the assembly of French clergy next year with his memorable sermon on the unity of the Church, and by his authority carried, in a form decisive for freedom while respectful towards Rome, the four articles which formulated the liberties of the Gallican Church. The duties of his diocese, controversy against Protestantism, the controversy against Quietism, in which Fénelon was his antagonist, devotional writings, strictures upon the stage, controversy against the enlightened Biblical criticism of Richard Simon, filled his energetic elder years. He ceased from a life of glorious labour and resolute combat in April 1704.

The works of Bossuet, setting aside his commentaries on Holy Scripture, devotional treatises, and letters, fall into three chief groups: the eloquence of the pulpit, controversial writings, and writings designed for the instruction of the Dauphin.

Political eloquence could not exist where power was

grasped by the hands of one great ruler. Judicial eloquence lacked the breadth and elevation which come with political freedom; it contented itself with subtleties of argument, decked with artificial flowers of style. The pulpit was the school of oratory. St. Vincent de Paul had preached with unction and a grave simplicity, and Bossuet, his disciple, felt his influence. But the offering which Bossuet laid upon the altar must needs be costly, an offering of all his powers. While an unalterable good sense regulates all he wrote, the sweep of his intellect demanded plenitude of expression; his imagination, if it dealt with life and death, must needs deal with them at times in the way of magnificence, which was natural to it; and his lyrical enthusiasm, fed by the prophetic poetry of the Old Testament, could not but find an escape in words. He sought no literary fame; his sermons were acts of faith, acts of duty. Out of the vast mass of his discourses he printed one, a sermon of public importance—that on the unity of the Church.

At the request of friends, some of the Funeral Orations were published. These, with his address on the profession of Louise de La Vallière, were all that could be read of Bossuet's pulpit oratory by his contemporaries. His sermons were carefully meditated and prepared, but he would not check his power of lofty improvisation by following the words of a manuscript. After his death his papers had perilous adventures. By the devotion of his first editor, Déforis, nearly two hundred sermons were after many years recovered; later students have presented them with as close an approximation as is possible to their original form. Bossuet's first manner — that of the years at Metz—is sometimes marred by scholastic subtleties, a pomp of quotations, too curious imagery,

and a temper rather aggressive than conciliating. During the period when he preached in Paris he was master of all his powers, which move with freedom and at the same time with a majestic order; his grandeur grows out of simplicity. As Bishop of Meaux he exhorted his flock out of the abundance of his heart, often without the intermediary of written preparation.

He is primarily a doctor of the faith: dogma first, determined by authority, and commending itself to human reason; morality, not independent, but proceeding from or connected with dogma, and while truly human yet resting upon divine foundations. But neither dogma nor morals are presented in the manner of the schools; both are made living powers by the preacher's awe, adoration, joy, charity, indignation, pity; in the large ordonnance of his discourse each passion finds its natural place. His eloquence grows out of his theme; his logic is the logic of clear and natural ideas; he is lucid, rapid, energetic; then suddenly some aspect of his subject awakens a lyrical emotion, and the preacher rises into the prophet.

Bossuet's panegyrics of the saints are sermons in which doctrine and morals are enforced by great examples. His *Oraisons Funèbres* preach, for the uses of the living, the doctrine of death. Nowhere else does he so fill the mind with a sense of the greatness and the glory of life as when he stands beside the bier and reviews the achievements or presents the characters of the illustrious deceased. Observing as he did all the decorum of the occasion, his discourses do not degenerate into mere adulation; some are historic surveys, magnificent in their breadth of view and mastery of events. He presents things as he saw them, and he did not always see

aright. Cromwell is a hypocrite and an impostor; the revocation of the edict of Nantes is the laudable act of a king who is a defender of the faith. The intolerance of Bossuet proceeds not so much from his heart as from the logic of his orthodoxy. His heart had a tenderness which breaks forth in many places, and signally in the discourse occasioned by the death of the Duchess of Orleans. This, and the eloquent memorials of her mother, Henrietta, Queen of England, and of the Prince de Condé, touch the heights and depths of the passions proper to the grave.

Bossuet's polemic against Protestantism is sufficiently represented by his *Exposition de la Doctrine Catholique* (published 1671) and the *Histoire des Variations des Églises Protestantes* (1688). The latter, in its fifteen books, is an attempt to overwhelm the contending Protestant communions by one irresistible attack. Their diversities of error are contrasted with the one, unchanging faith of the infallible Church. Lutherans, Calvinists, Anglicans, the Albigenses, the Hussites, the Wicliffites are routed and slain, as opponents are slain in theological warfare —to rise again. History and theology co-operate in the result. The characters of the Protestant Reformers are studied with a remorseless scrutiny, and an art which can bring into relief what the work of art requires. Why the children of the infallible Church rose up in disobedience against their mother is left unexplained. The great heresy, Bossuet was persuaded, had almost reached its term; the intellectual chaos would soon be restored to universal order under the successors of Innocent XI.

In the embittered controversy with his brother-Bishop of Cambrai, on the significance of which the singular

autobiography of Madame Guyon[1] throws much light, Bossuet remained the victor. It was a contention between dogmatic rectitude and the temper of emotional religion. Bossuet was at first unversed in the writings of the Catholic mystics. Being himself a fully-formed will, watchful and armed for obedience and command—the "man under authority"—he rightly divined the dangers to dogmatic faith arising from self-abandonment to God within the heart. The elaborate structure of orthodoxy seemed to dissolve in the ardour of a personal emotion; it seemed to him another form of the individualism which he condemned. The Church was a great objective reality; it had laid down a system of belief. A love of God which ignored the method of God, was but a spurious love, leading to destruction.

Protestant self-will, mystical private emotion—these were in turn met by the champion of tradition, and, as he trusted, were subdued. Another danger he perceived, not in the unregenerate will or wandering heart, but in the critical intelligence. Bossuet again was right in viewing with alarm the Biblical studies of Richard Simon. But his scholarship was here defective. He succeeded in suppressing an edition of the *Histoire Critique du Vieux Testament.* There were printers in Holland beyond the reach of Bossuet's arm; and Simon continued the work which others have carried further with the aids of more exact science.

To doubt the government of His world by the Divine Ruler, who assigns us our duty and our place, is to sap the principles of authority and of obedience. The doctrine of God's providence is at the centre of all Bossuet's system of thought, at the heart of his loyal

[1] Translated into English for the first time in full, 1897, by T. T. Allen.

passions. On earth, the powers that be; in France, the monarch; in heaven, a greater Monarch (we will not say a magnified Louis XIV.) presiding over all the affairs of this globe. When Bossuet tried to educate his indocile pupil the Dauphin, he taught him how God is above man, as man is above the brute. Monarchy—as he showed in his *Politique Tirée de l'Écriture Sainte*—is hereditary and absolute; but absolute power is not arbitrary power; the King is God's subject, and his laws must conform to those of his Divine Ruler. The *Discours sur l'Histoire Universelle* (1681) was written in the first instance for the Dauphin; but its purpose was partly apologetic, and Bossuet, especially in the second part of the book, had the errors of free-thinkers—Spinoza and Simon—before his mind.

The seventeenth century had not contributed largely to historical literature, save in the form of memoirs. Mézeray, in the first half of the century, Fleury, in the second, cannot be ranked among those writers who illuminate with profound and just ideas. The Cartesian philosophy viewed historical studies with haughty indifference. Bossuet's *Discours* is a vindication of the ways of God in history, a theology of human progress. He would exhibit the nations and generations of human-kind bound each to each under the Providential government. The life of humanity, from Adam to Charlemagne, is mapped into epochs, ages, periods—the periods of nature, of the law, and of grace. In religion is found the unity of human history. By religion is meant Judaism and Christianity; by Christianity is meant the Catholicism of Rome.

Having expounded the Divine policy in the government of the world, Bossuet is free to study those

secondary causes which have determined the rise and fall of empires. With magisterial authority, and with majestic skill, he presents the movements of races and peoples. His sympathy with the genius of ancient Rome proceeds not only from his comprehensive grasp of facts, but from a kinship between his own and the Roman type of character. The magnificent design of Bossuet was magnificently accomplished. He hoped to extend his studies, and apply his method to other parts of his vast subject, but the hope was not to be fulfilled. A disinterested student of the philosophy of history he is not; he is the theologian who marshals facts under an accepted dogma. A conception of Providence may indeed emerge from the researches of a devout investigator of the life of humanity as their last result; but towards that conception the secular life and the various religions of the world will contribute; the ways of the Divine Spirit will appear other than those of the anthropomorphic Ruler of Bossuet's imagination. He was not an original thinker; he would have scorned such a distinction — "l'hérétique est celui qui a une opinion"; he had received the truth, and only gave it extended applications. He is "le sublime orateur des idées communes."

More than an orator, before all else he was a combatant. Falling at his post as the eighteenth century opened, he is like some majestic, white-haired paladin of old romances which tell of the strife between French chivalry and the Saracenic hordes. Bossuet fell; the age of growing incredulity and novel faiths was inaugurated; the infidels passed over the body of the champion of conservative tradition.

II

Bossuet's contemporaries esteemed him as a preacher less highly than they esteemed the Jesuit Bourdaloue. The life of LOUIS BOURDALOUE (1632–1704) is told in the words of Vinet: "He preached, confessed, consoled, and then he died." It does credit to his hearers that they valued him aright—a modest man of simple probity. He spoke, with downcast eyes and full harmonious voice, as a soul to souls; his eloquence was not that of the rhetorician; his words were grave and plain and living, and were pressed home with the force of their reality. He aimed never at display, but always at conviction. When the crowd at St. Sulpice was moved as he entered the church and ascended the pulpit, "Silence!" cried the Prince de Condé, "there is our enemy!" Bourdaloue marshalled his arguments and expositions with the elaborate skill of a tactician; he sought to capture the judgment; he reached the heart through a wise director's knowledge of its inmost processes. When his words were touched with emotion, it was the involuntary manifestation of the life within him. His studies of character sometimes tended to the form of portraits of moral types, features in which could be identified with actual persons; but in these he was the moralist, not the satirist. During four-and-thirty years Bourdaloue distributed, to those who would take it, the bread of life—plain, wholesome, prepared skilfully and with clean hands, never varying from the evenness and excellence of its quality. He does not startle or dazzle a reader; he does what is better—he nourishes.

Bourdaloue pronounced only two *Oraisons Funèbres*,

and those under the constraint of duty. He thought the Christian pulpit was meant for less worldly uses than the eulogy of mortal men. The *Oraison Funèbre* was more to the taste of Mascaron (1634–1703), whose unequal rhetoric was at its best in his panegyric of Turenne; more to the taste of the elegant FLÉCHIER, Bishop of Nîmes. All the literary graces were cultivated by Fléchier (1632–1710), and his eloquence is unquestionable; but it was not the eloquence proper to the pulpit. He was a man of letters, a man of the world, formed in the school of preciosity, a haunter of the Hôtel de Rambouillet; knowing the surface of society, he knew as a moralist how to depict its manners and the evil that lay in them. He did not apply doctrine to life like Bossuet, nor search the heart with Bourdaloue's serious zeal; to save souls was indeed important; to exhibit his talents before the King was also important. But the true eloquence of the pulpit has deeper springs than lay in Fléchier's mundane spirit. Already the decadence has begun.

Protestantism had its preacher in JACQUES SAURIN (1677–1730), clear, logical, energetic, with negligences of style and sudden flashes of genius. But he belongs to London, to Geneva, to the Hague more perhaps than to France. An autumnal colouring, bright and abundant, yet indicative of the decline, is displayed in the discourses of the latest of the great pulpit orators, JEAN-BAPTISTE MASSILLON (1663–1742), who belongs more to the eighteenth than to the seventeenth century. "He must increase," said Bourdaloue, "but I must decrease." Massillon, with gifts of person and of natural grace, sensitive, tender, a student and professor of the rhetorical art, sincerely devout, yet with waverings

towards the world, had something in his genius that resembled Racine. A pathetic sentiment, a feeling for human passions, give his sermons qualities which contrast with the severer manner of Bourdaloue. They are simple in plan; the preacher's art lay in deploying and developing a few ideas, and infusing into them an imaginative sensibility; he is facile and abundant; faultless in amenity, but deficient in force and fire. Yet the opening words of the Funeral Oration on Louis XIV.—"God alone is great, my brethren"—are noble in their simplicity; and the thought of Jesus suddenly appearing in "the most august assembly of the world"—in the chapel at Versailles—startled the hearers of the sermon on the "small number of the elect." "There is an orator!" cried the actor Baron, "we are only comedians;" but no actor would have instituted a comparison between himself and Bourdaloue. "When one enters the avenue at Versailles," said Massillon, "one feels an enervating air."

He was aware of the rising tide of luxury and vice around him; he tried to meet it, tracing the scepticism of the time to its ill-regulated passions; but he met scepticism by morality detached from dogma. The *Petit Carême*, preached before Louis XV. when a child of eight, expresses the sanguine temper of the moment: the young King would grow into the father of his people; the days of peace would return. Great and beneficent kings are not effeminately amiable; it were better if Massillon had preached "Be strong" than "Be tender." Voltaire kept on his desk the sermons of Massillon, and loved to hear the musical periods of the *Petit Carême* read aloud at meal-time. To be the favourite preacher of eighteenth-century philosophers is a distinction somewhat compromising to an exponent of the faith.

III

Bossuet's great antagonist in the controversy concerning Quietism might have found the approval of the philosophers for some of his political opinions. His religious writings would have spoken to them in an unknown tongue.

François de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénelon was born in Périgord (1651), of an ancient and illustrious family. Of one whose intellect and character were infinitely subtle and complex, the blending of all opposites, it is possible to sustain the most conflicting opinions, and perhaps in the end no critic can seize this Proteus. Saint-Simon noticed how in his noble countenance every contrary quality was expressed, and how all were harmonised: "Il fallait faire effort pour cesser de le regarder." During the early years of his clerical career he acted as superior to female converts from Protestantism, and as missionary among the unconverted Calvinists. In 1689 he was appointed tutor to the King's grandson, the Duc de Bourgogne, and from a passionate boy he transformed his pupil into a youth too blindly docile. Fénelon's nomination to the Archbishopric of Cambrai (1695), which removed him from the court, was in fact a check to his ambition. His religious and his political views were regarded by Louis XIV. as dangerous for the Church and the monarchy.

Through his personal interest in Mme. Guyon, and his sympathy with her mystical doctrine in religion—one which inculcated complete abnegation of the will, and its replacement by absolute surrender to the Divine love—he came into conflict with Bossuet, and after a

fierce war of diplomacy and of pamphlets, in which Fénelon displayed the utmost skill and energy as tactician and dialectician, he received a temperate condemnation from Rome, and submitted. The death of the Dauphin (1711), which left his former pupil heir to the throne, revived Fénelon's hopes of political influence, but in the next year these hopes disappeared with the decease of the young Duc de Bourgogne. At Cambrai, where he discharged his episcopal duties like a saint and a *grand seigneur*, Fénelon died six months before Louis XIV., in 1715.

"The most original intellect—if we set Pascal aside—of the seventeenth century"—so Fénelon is described by one excellent critic. "Antique and modern," writes his biographer, M. Paul Janet, "Christian and profane, mystical and diplomatic, familiar and noble, gentle and headstrong, natural and subtle, fascinating the eighteenth century as he had fascinated the seventeenth, believing like a child, and daring as Spinoza, Fénelon is one of the most original figures which the Catholic Church has produced." His first publication was the treatise *De l'Éducation des Filles* (written 1681, published 1687), composed at the request of his friends the Duc and Duchesse de Beauvilliers. It is based on a recognition of the dignity of woman and the duty of a serious effort to form her mind. It honours the reason, opposes severity, would make instruction, as far as possible, a delight, and would exhibit goodness in a gracious aspect; commends object-lessons in addition to book-learning, indicates characteristic feminine failings (yet liveliness of disposition is not regarded as one of these), exhorts to a dignified simplicity in dress. The range of studies recommended is narrow, but for Fénelon's time it was

liberal; the book marks an epoch in the history of female education.

For his pupil the Duc de Bourgogne, Fénelon wrote his graceful prose *Fables* (which also include under that title short tales, allegories, and fairy stories), the *Dialogues des Morts*, aiming at the application of moral principles to politics, and his *Télémaque*, named in the first (incomplete) edition *Suite du IV^e Livre de l'Odyssée* (1699). In this, for long the most popular of tales for the young, Fénelon's imaginative devotion to antiquity finds ample expression; it narrates the wanderings of Telemachus in search of his father Ulysses, under the warning guidance and guardianship of Minerva disguised as Mentor. Imitations and borrowings from classical authors are freely and skilfully made. It is a poem in prose, a romance of education, designed at once to charm the imagination and to inculcate truths of morals, politics, and religion. The didactic purpose is evident, yet it remains a true work of art, full of grace and colour, occasionally, indeed, languid, but often vivid and forcible.

Fénelon's views on politics were not so much fantastic as those of an idealist. He dreamed of a monarchy which should submit to the control of righteousness; he mourned over the pride and extravagance of the court; he constantly pleaded against wars of ambition; he desired that a powerful and Christian nobility should mediate between the crown and the people; he conceived a system of decentralisation which should give the whole nation an interest in public affairs; in his ecclesiastical views he was Ultramontane rather than Gallican. These ideas are put forth in his *Direction pour la Conscience d'un Roi* and the *Plan de Gouvernement.*

Louis XIV. suspected the political tendency of *Télémaque*, and caused the printing of the first edition to be suspended. Fénelon has sometimes been regarded as a forerunner of the Revolutionary movement; but he would rather, by ideas in which, as events proved, there may have been something chimerical, have rendered revolution impossible.

Into his controversy with Bossuet he threw himself with a combative energy and a skill in defence and attack that surprise one who knows him only through his *Lettres Spirituelles*, which tend towards the effacement of the will in a union with God through love. Bossuet pleaded against the dangers for morals and for theology of a false mysticism; Fénelon, against confounding true mysticism with what is false. In his *Traité de l'Existence de Dieu* he shows himself a bold and subtle thinker: the first part, which is of a popular character, attempts to prove the existence of the Deity by the argument from design in nature and from the reason in man; the second part — of a later date — follows Descartes in metaphysical proofs derived from our idea of an infinite and a perfect being. To his other distinctions Fénelon added that of a literary critic, unsurpassed in his time, unless it be by Boileau. His *Dialogues sur l'Éloquence* seek to replace the elaborate methods of logical address, crowded with divisions and subdivisions, and supported with a multitude of quotations, by a style simple, natural, and delicate in its fervency.

The admirable *Lettre à l'Académie*, Fénelon's latest gift to literature, states the case of the ancients against the moderns, and of the moderns against the ancients, with an attempt at impartiality, but it is evident that the

writer's love was chiefly given to his favourite classical authors; simplicity and natural beauty attracted him more than ingenuity or wit or laboured brilliance. He feared that the language was losing some of its richness and flexibility; he condemns the use of rhyme; he is hardly just to Racine, but honours himself by his admiration of Molière. In dealing with historical writings he recognises the importance of the study of governments, institutions, and social life, and at the same time values highly a personal, vivid, direct manner, and a feeling for all that is real, concrete, and living. To his rare gifts of intellect and of the soul was added an inexpressible personal charm, in which something that was almost feminine was united with the reserved power and authority of a man.

CHAPTER VIII

TRANSITION TO THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

THE spiritual life was interpreted from within by Fénelon. The facts of the moral world, as seen in society, were studied, analysed, and portrayed by La Bruyère and Saint-Simon.

JEAN DE LA BRUYÈRE (1645–96), a Parisian of the *bourgeoisie*, appointed preceptor in history to the grandson of the great Condé, saw with the keen eyes of a disenchanted observer the spectacle of seventeenth-century society. In 1688, appended to his translation of the Characters of Theophrastus, appeared his only important work, *Les Caractères ou les Mœurs de ce Siècle;* revised and enlarged editions followed, until the ninth was published in 1696. "I restore to the public," he wrote, "what the public lent me." In a series of sixteen chapters, each consisting of detached paragraphs, his studies of human life and of the social environment are presented in the form of maxims, reflections, observations, portraits. For the maxims a recent model lay before him in the little volume of La Rochefoucauld; portraits, for which the romances of Mlle. de Scudéry had created a taste, had been exhibited in a collection formed by Mlle. de Montpensier—the growth of her *salon*—in collaboration with Segrais (*Divers Portraits*, 1659). Aware of his mastery as a painter of

character, La Bruyère added largely to the number of his portraits in the later editions. Keys, professing to identify his character-sketches with living persons, enhanced the interest excited by the work; but in many instances La Bruyère aims at presenting a type rather than an individual, a type which had been individualised by his observation of actual persons.

A profound or an original thinker he was not. Incapable of employing base means to attain worldly success, his honourable failure left a certain bitterness in his spirit; he regarded the life around him as a looker-on, who enjoyed the spectacle, and enjoyed also to note the infirmities of those who took part in the game which he had declined. He is neither a determined pessimist, nor did he see realities through a roseate veil; he neither thinks basely of human nature nor in a heroic fashion: he studies its weakness with a view, he declares, to reformation, but actually, perhaps, more in the way of an observer than of a moral teacher. He is before all else a "naturalist," a naturalist with a sufficient field for investigation, though the life of the provinces and that of the fields (save in their more obvious aspect of mournful toil) lie beyond his sphere. The value of his criticisms of men and manners arises partly from the fact that he is not pledged to a system, that he can take up various points of view, and express the results of many moods of mind. Now he is severe, and again he is indulgent; now he appears almost a cynic, and presently we find that his heart is tender; now he is grave, and in a moment mirthful; while for every purpose and in every mood he has irony at his command. He divines the working of the passions with a fine intelligence, and is a master in noting every

outward betrayal or indication of the hidden processes of the heart.

The successive chapters deal with the intellect and authorship, personal merit, women, the heart, society and conversation, the gifts of fortune, the town, the court, men in high station, the King and commonwealth, the nature of man, judgments and criticism, fashion, customs, the pulpit; and under each head are grouped, without formal system, those notes on life and studies of society that had gradually accumulated in the author's mind. A final chapter, "Des Esprits Forts," expresses a vague spiritual philosophy, which probably was not insincere, and which at least served to commend the mundane portion of his book to pious readers. The special attraction of the whole lies in its variety. A volume merely of maxims would have been too rigid, too oracular for such a versatile spirit as that of La Bruyère. "Different things," he says, "are thought out by different methods, and explained by diverse expressions, it may be by a sentence, an argument, a metaphor or some other figure, a parallel, a simple comparison, a complete fact, a single feature, by description, or by portraiture." His book contains all these, and his style corresponds with the variety of matter and method — a style, as Voltaire justly characterises it, rapid, concise, nervous, picturesque. "Among all the different modes in which a single thought may be expressed," wrote La Bruyère, "only one is correct." To find this exact expression he sometimes over-labours his style, and searches the vocabulary too curiously for the most striking word. In his desire for animation the periodic structure of sentence yields to one of interruptions, suspensions, and

surprises. He is at once a moralist and a virtuoso in the literary art.

The greater part of Saint-Simon's life and the composition of his *Mémoires* belong to the eighteenth century; but his mind was moulded during his early years, and retained its form and lineaments. He may be regarded as a belated representative of the great age of Louis XIV. If he belongs in some degree to the newer age by virtue of his sense that political reform was needed, his designs of political reform were derived from the past rather than pointed towards the future. LOUIS DE ROUVRAY, DUC DE SAINT-SIMON, was born at Versailles in 1675. He cherished the belief that his ancestry could be traced to Charlemagne. His father, a page of Louis XIII., had been named a duke and peer of France in 1635; from his father descended to the son a devotion to the memory of Louis XIII., and a passionate attachment to the dignity of his own order.

Saint-Simon's education was narrow, but he acquired some Latin, and was a diligent reader of French history. In 1691 he was presented to the King and was enrolled as a soldier in the musketeers. He purchased by-and-by what we should now call the colonelcy of a cavalry regiment, but was ill-pleased with the system which had transformed a feudal army into one where birth and rank were subjected to official control; and in 1702, when others received promotion and he was passed over, he sent in his resignation. Having made a fortunate and happy marriage, Saint-Simon was almost constantly at Versailles until the death of the King, and obtained the most intimate acquaintance with what he terms the mechanics of the court. He had many grievances against Louis XIV., chief among them the insult shown to the

nobility in the King's legitimatising his natural offspring; and he justly regarded Madame de Maintenon as his enemy.

The death of the Duc de Bourgogne, to whose party he belonged, was a blow to Saint-Simon's hopes; but the Regent remained his friend. He helped, on a diplomatic mission to Spain, to negotiate the marriage of Louis XV.; yet still was on fire with indignation caused by the wrongs of the dukes and peers, whom he regarded as entitled on historical grounds to form the great council of the monarchy, and almost as rightful partners in the supreme power. His political life closed in 1723 with the death of the Regent. He lived in retirement at his château of La Ferté-Vidame, sorrowfully surviving his wife and his sons. In Paris, at the age of eighty (1755), Saint-Simon died.

When nineteen years old, reading Bassompierre's *Mémoires* in a soldier's hour of leisure, he conceived the idea of recording his own experiences, and the *Mémoires* of Saint-Simon were begun. During later years, in the camp or at the court, notes accumulated in his hands, but the definitive form which they took was not determined until, in his retirement at La Ferté-Vidame, the *Journal* of Dangeau came into his hands. Dangeau's *Journal* is dry, colourless, passionless, without insight and without art; but it is a well-informed and an exact chronicle, extending over the years from 1684 to 1720. Saint-Simon found it "d'une fadeur à faire vomir"; its servility towards the King and Madame de Maintenon enraged him; but it exhibited facts in an orderly sequence; it might serve as a guide and a clue among his own reminiscences; on the basis of Dangeau's literal transcript of occurrences he might weave his own

brilliant recitals and passionate presentations of character. Thus Saint-Simon's *Mémoires* came to be written.

He himself saw much, and his eye had a demonic power of observation ; nothing escaped his vision, and his passions enabled him to penetrate through what he saw to its secret meanings. He had gathered information from those who knew the mysteries of the palace and the court ; great persons, court ladies, even valets and waiting-women, had been sought and searched to satisfy his insatiable curiosity. It is true that the passions which often lit up the truth sometimes obscured it; any gossip discreditable to those whom he hated was welcome to him ; he confesses that he did not pique himself on his impartiality, and it is certain that he did not always verify details. Nevertheless he did not consciously falsify facts ; he had a sense of the honour of a gentleman ; his spirit was serious, and his feeling of duty and of religion was sincere. Without his impetuosity, his violence, his exaggerations, we might not have had his vividness, like that of life itself, his incomparable portraits, more often inspired by hatred than by love, his minuteness and his breadth of style, the phrases which ineffaceably brand his victims, the lyrical outcry of triumph over enemies of his order. His style is the large style of seventeenth-century prose, but alive with words that sparkle and gleam, words sometimes created by himself to express the intensity of his imagination.

The *Mémoires*, the final preparation of which was the work of his elder years, cover the period from 1691 to 1723. His manuscripts were bequeathed to his cousin, the Bishop of Metz ; a lawsuit arose with Saint-Simon's creditors, and in the end the papers were buried among

the public archives. Considerable fragments saw the light before the close of the eighteenth century, but it was not until 1829–31 that a true *editio princeps*, substantially correct, was published. The violences and irregularities of Saint-Simon's style offered no obstacle to the admiration of readers at a time when the romantic movement was dominant. He was hailed as the Tacitus of French history, and had his manner something more of habitual concentration the comparison would not be unjust.

The eighteenth century may be said to have begun before the year 1701 with the quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns. If we can speak of any one idea as dominant during the age of the philosophers, it is the idea of human progress. Through an academic disputation that idea emerged to the light. At first a religious question was complicated with a question relating to art; afterwards the religious question was replaced by one of philosophy. As early as 1657, Desmarets de Saint-Sorlin, turned pietist after a youth of licence, maintained in theory, as well as by the examples of his unreadable epic poems, that Christian heroism and Christian faith afforded material for imaginative handling more suitable to a Christian poet than the history and fables of antiquity. Boileau, in the third *chant* of his *Art Poétique*, replied—the mysteries of the Christian faith are too solemn, too awful, to be tricked out to gratify the fancy.

Desmarets dying, bequeathed his contention to CHARLES PERRAULT (1628–1703), who had burlesqued the *Æneid*, written light and fragile pieces of verse, and occupied himself as a dilettante in patristic and historical studies. In 1687, after various skirmishes between partisans on

either side, the quarrel assumed a new importance. The King had recovered after a painful operation; it was a moment for gratulation. Perrault, at a sitting of the Academy, read his poem *Le Siècle de Louis le Grand*, in which the revolt against the classical tyranny was formulated, and contemporary authors were glorified at the expense of the poets of antiquity. Boileau murmured, indignant; Racine offered ironical commendations; other Academicians patriotically applauded their own praises. Light-feathered epigrams sped to and fro.

Fontenelle, in his *Discours sur l'Églogue* and a *Digression sur les Anciens et les Modernes*, widened the field of debate. Were trees in ancient days taller than those in our own fields? If not, why may not modern men equal Homer, Plato, and Demosthenes? "Nothing checks the progress of things, nothing confines the intelligence so much as admiration of the ancients." Genius is bestowed by Nature on every age, but knowledge grows from generation to generation. In his dialogues entitled the *Parallèle des Anciens et des Modernes* (1688–97), Perrault maintained that in art, in science, in literature, the law of the human mind is a law of progress; that we are the true ancients of the earth, wise with inherited science, more exact in reasoning, more refined in psychological distinctions, raised to a higher plane by Christianity, by the invention of printing, and by the favour of a great monarch. La Fontaine in his charming *Épître* to Huet, La Bruyère in his *Caractères*, Boileau in his ill-tempered *Réflexions sur Longin*, rallied the supporters of classicism. Gradually the fires smouldered or were assuaged; Boileau and Perrault were reconciled.

Perrault, if he did not honour antiquity in classical

forms, paid a homage to popular tradition in his delightful *Contes de ma Mère l'Oie* (if, indeed, the tales be his), which have been a joy to generations of children. With inferior art, Madame d'Aulnoy added to the golden treasury for the young. When, fifteen or twenty years after the earlier war, a new campaign began between the Ancients and the Moderns, the philosophical discussion of the idea of progress had separated itself from the literary quarrel. But in the tiltings of Lamotte-Houdart, the champion of the moderns, against a well-equipped female knight, the learned Madame Dacier—indignant at Lamotte's *Iliade*, recast in the eighteenth-century taste—a new question was raised, and one of significance for the eighteenth century — that of the relative merits of prose and verse.

Lamotte, a writer of comedy, tragedy, opera, fables, eclogues, odes, maintained that the highest literary form is prose, and he versified none the less. The age was indeed an age of prose—an age when the *salons* discussed the latest discovery in science, the latest doctrine in philosophy or politics. Its imaginative enthusiasm passed over from art to speculation, and what may be called the poetry of the eighteenth century is to be found less in its odes or dramas or elegies than in the hopes and visions which gathered about that idea of human progress emerging from a literary discussion, idle, perhaps, in appearance, but in its inner significance no unfitting inauguration of an era which looked to the future rather than to the past.

Bernard Le Bovier de Fontenelle (1657–1757), a son of Corneille's sister, whose intervention in the quarrel of Ancients and Moderns turned the discussion in the direction of philosophy, belongs to both the

seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. In the hundred years which made up his life, there was indeed time for a second Fontenelle to develop from the first. The first Fontenelle, satirised as the Cydias of La Bruyère, "un composé du pédant et du précieux," was an aspirant poet, without vision, without passion, who tried to compensate his deficiencies by artificial elegances of style. The origin of hissing is maliciously dated by Racine from his tragedy *Aspar*. His operas fluttered before they fell; his *Églogues* had not life enough to flutter. The *Dialogues des Morts* (1683) is a young writer's effort to be clever by paradox, an effort to show his wit by incongruous juxtapositions, and a cynical levelling of great reputations. But there was another Fontenelle, the untrammelled disciple of Descartes, a man of universal interests, passionless, but curious for all knowledge, an assimilator of new ideas, a dissolver of old beliefs, an intermediary between science and the world of fashion, a discreet insinuator of doubts, who smiled but never condescended to laugh, an intelligence supple, subtle, and untiring.

In 1686 he published his *Entretiens sur la Pluralité des Mondes*, evening conversations between an astronomer and a marchioness, half-scientific, half-gallant, learned coquetries with science, for which he asked no more serious attention than a novel might require, while he communicated the theories of Descartes and the discoveries of Galileo, suggested that science is our safest way to truth, and that truth at best is not absolute but relative to the human understanding. The *Histoire des Oracles*, in which the cargo of Dutch erudition that loaded his original by Van Dale is skilfully lightened, glided to the edge of theological storm. Fontenelle

would show that the pagan oracles were not delivered by demons, and did not cease at the coming of Jesus Christ; innocent opinions, but apt to illustrate the origins and growth of superstitions, from which we too may not be wholly free in spite of all our advantages of true religion and sound philosophy. Of course God's chosen people are not like unguided Greeks or Romans; and yet human beings are much the same in all times and places. The Jesuit Baltus scented heresy, and Fontenelle was very ready to admit that the devil was a prophet, since Father Baltus wished it so to be, and held the opinion to be orthodox.

Appointed perpetual secretary of the *Académie des Sciences* in 1697, Fontenelle pronounced during forty years the panegyrics of those who had been its members. These *Éloges des Académiciens* are masterpieces in a difficult art, luminous, dignified, generous without ostentation, plain without poverty of thought or expression. The discreet Fontenelle loved tranquillity—"If I had my hand full of truths, I should take good care before I opened it." He never lost a friend, acting on two prudent maxims, "Everything is possible," and "Every one is right." "It is not a heart," said Madame de Tencin, "which you have in your breast; it is a brain." It was a kindly brain, which could be for a moment courageous. And thus it was possible for him to enter his hundredth year, still interested in ideas, still tranquil and alert.

A great arsenal for the uses of eighteenth-century philosophy was constructed and stored by PIERRE BAYLE (1647–1706) in his *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique*, of which the first edition was published in 1697. Science, which found its popular interpreter in Fontenelle, was

a region hardly entered by Bayle; the general history of Europe, from the close of the mediæval period, and especially the records in every age of mythologies, religions, theologies, philosophies, formed his province, and it was one of wide extent. Born in 1647, son of a Protestant pastor, educated by Jesuits, converted by them and reconverted, professor of philosophy at Sedan, a fugitive to Rotterdam, professor there of history and philosophy, deprived of his position for unorthodox opinions, Bayle found rest not in cessation from toil, but in the research of a sceptical scholar, peaceably and endlessly pursued.

His early zeal of proselytism languished and expired. In its place came a boundless curiosity, a penetrating sagacity. His vast accumulations of knowledge were like those of the students of the Renaissance. The tendencies of his intellect anticipate the tendencies of the eighteenth century, but with him scepticism had not become ambitious or dogmatic. He followed tranquilly where reason and research led, and saw no cause why religion and morals more than any other subjects should not be submitted to the scrutiny of rational inquiry. Since men have held all beliefs, and are more prone to error than apt to find the truth, why should any opinions be held sacred? Let us ascertain and expose the facts. In doing so, we shall learn the lesson of universal tolerance; and if the principle of authority in matters of religion be gently sapped, can this be considered an evil? Morals, which have their foundation in the human understanding, remain, though all theologies may be in doubt. If the idea of Providence be a superstition, why should not man guide his life by good sense and moderation? Bayle did not attack existing beliefs

with the battering-ram : he quietly removed a stone here and a stone there from the foundations. If he is aggressive, it is by means of a tranquil irony. The errors of human-kind are full of curious interest ; the disputes of theologians are both curious and amusing ; the moral licences of men and women are singular and often diverting. Why not instruct and entertain our minds with the facts of the world ?

The instruction is delivered by Bayle in the dense and sometimes heavy columns of his text ; the entertainment will be found in the rambling gossip, interspersed with illuminating ideas, of his notes. Almost every eminent writer of the eighteenth century was a debtor to Bayle's Dictionary. He kept his contemporaries informed of all that was added to knowledge in his periodical publication, *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres* (begun in 1684). He called himself a cloud-compeller : "My gift is to create doubts ; but they are no more than doubts." Yet there is light, if not warmth, in such a genius for criticism as his ; and it was light not only for France, but for Europe.

BOOK THE FOURTH

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

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CHAPTER I

MEMOIRS AND HISTORY—POETRY—THE THEATRE—THE NOVEL

I

THE literature of the second half of the seventeenth century was monarchical, Christian, classical. The eighteenth century was to lose the spirit of classical art while retaining many of its forms, to overthrow the domination of the Church, to destroy the monarchy. It was an age not of great art but of militant ideas, which more and more came to utilise art as their vehicle. Political speculation, criticism, science, sceptical philosophy invaded literature. The influence of England—of English free-thinkers, political writers, men of science, essayists, novelists, poets—replaced the influence of Italy and Spain, and for long that of the models of ancient Greece and Rome. The century of the philosophers was eminently social and mundane; the *salons* revived; a new preciosity came into fashion; but as time went on the *salons* became rather the mart

of ideas philosophical and scientific than of the daintinesses of letters and of art. Journalism developed, and thought tended to action, applied itself directly to public life. While the work of destructive criticism proceeded, the bases of a moral reconstruction were laid; the free play of intellect was succeeded by a great enfranchisement of the passions; the work of Voltaire was followed by the work of Rousseau.

Before the close of the reign of Louis XIV. the old order of things had suffered a decline. War, famine, public debt, oppressive taxation had discredited the monarchy. A dull hypocrisy hardly disguised the gross licentiousness of the times. The revocation of the edict of Nantes had exiled those Protestants who formed a substantial part of the moral conscience of France. The bitter feud of brother-bishops, Bossuet and Fénelon, hurling defiance against each other for the love of God, had made religion a theme for mockery. Port-Royal, once the refuge of serious faith and strict morals, was destroyed. The bull *Unigenitus* expelled the spiritual element from French Christianity, reduced the clergy to a state of intellectual impotence, and made a lasting breach between them and the better part of the laity. Meanwhile the scientific movement had been proving its power. Science had come to fill the place left void by religion. The period of the Regency (1715–23) is one of transition from the past to the newer age, shameless in morals, degraded in art; the period of Voltaire followed, when intellect sapped and mined the old beliefs; with Rousseau came the explosion of sentiment and an effort towards reconstruction. A great political and social revolution closed the century.

The life of the time is seen in many memoirs, and in

the correspondence of many distinguished persons, both men and women. Among the former the *Mémoires* of Mdlle. Delaunay, afterwards Mme. de Staël (1684–1750) are remarkable for the vein of melancholy, subdued by irony, underlying a style which is formed for fine and clear exactness. The Duchesse du Maine's lady-in-waiting, daughter of a poor painter, but educated with care, drew delicately in her literary art with an etcher's tool, and her hand was controlled by a spirit which had in it something of the Stoic. The *Souvenirs* of Mme. de Caylus (1673–1729), niece of Mme. de Maintenon — "jamais de créature plus séduisante," says Saint-Simon —give pictures of the court, charming in their naïveté, grace, and mirth. Mme. d'Épinay, designing to tell the story of her own life, disguised as a piece of fiction, became in her *Mémoires* the chronicler of the manners of her time. The society of the *salons* and the men of letters is depicted in the Memoirs of Marmontel. These are but examples from an abundant literature constantly augmented to the days of Mme. de Campan and Mme. Roland. The general aspect of the social world in the mid-century is presented by the historian Duclos (1704–1772) in his *Considérations sur les Mœurs de ce Siècle*, and with reparation for his previous neglect of the part played in society by women in his *Mémoires pour servir à l'Histoire du XVIII^e Siècle.*

As much or more may be learnt from the letter-writers as from the writers of memoirs. If Voltaire did not take the first place by his correspondence, so vast, so luminous, so comprehensive, it might justly be assigned to his friend Mme. du Deffand (1697–1780), whose lucid intelligence perceived everything, whose disabused heart seemed detached until old age

from all that most interested her understanding. For clear good sense we turn to the Marquise de Lambert, for bourgeois worth and kindliness to Mme. Geoffrin, for passion which kindles the page to Mdlle. de Lespinasse, for sensibility and romance ripening to political ardour and strenuous convictions to Mme. Roland. Among the philosophers Diderot pours the torrent, clear or turbid, of his genius into his correspondence with affluent improvisation; D'Alembert is grave, temperate, lucid; the Abbé Galiani, the little Machiavel—"a pantomime from head to foot," said Diderot—the gay Neapolitan punchinello, given the freedom of Paris, that "capital of curiosity," is at once wit, cynic, thinker, scholar, and buffoon. These, again, are but examples from an epistolary swarm.

While the eighteenth century thus mirrored itself in memoirs and letters, it did not forget the life of past centuries. The studious Benedictines, who had already accomplished much, continued their erudite labours. Nicolas Fréret (1688–1749), taking all antiquity for his province, illuminated the study of chronology, geography, sciences, arts, language, religion. Daniel and Velly narrated the history of France. Vertot (1655–1735), with little of the spirit of historical fidelity, displayed certain gifts of an historical artist. The school of scepticism was represented by the Jesuit Hardouin, who doubted the authenticity of all records of the past except those of his own numismatic treasures. Questions as to the principles of historical certitude occupied the Academy of Inscriptions during many sittings from 1720 onwards, and produced a body of important studies. While the Physiocrats were endeavouring to demonstrate that there is a natural order in social circumstances, a philo-

sophy of history, which bound the ages together, was developed in the writings of Montesquieu and Turgot, if not of Voltaire. The *Esprit des Lois*, the *Essai sur les Mœurs*, and Turgot's discourses, delivered in 1750 at the Sorbonne, contributed in different degrees and ways towards a new and profounder conception of the life of societies or of humanity. By Turgot for the first time the idea of progress was accepted as the ruling principle of history. It cannot be denied that, as regards the sciences of inorganic nature, he more than foreshadowed Comte's theory of the three states, theological, metaphysical, and positive, through which the mind of humanity is alleged to have travelled.

In the second half of the century, history tended to become doctrinaire, aggressive, declamatory—a pamphlet in the form of treatise or narrative. Morelly wrote in the interest of socialistic ideas, which correspond to those of modern collectivism. Mably, inspired at first by enthusiasm for the ancient republics, advanced to a communistic creed. Condorcet, as the century drew towards a close, bringing together the ideas of economists and historians, traced human progress through the past, and uttered ardent prophecies of human perfectibility in the future.

II

Poetry other than dramatic grew in the eighteenth century upon a shallow soil. The more serious and the more ardent mind of the time was occupied with science, the study of nature, the study of society, philosophical speculation, the criticism of religion, of government, and of social arrangements. The old basis of belief upon

which reposed the great art of the preceding century had given way. The analytic intellect distrusted the imagination. The conventions of a brilliant society were unfavourable to the contemplative mood of high poetry. The tyranny of the "rules" remained when the enthusiasm which found guidance and a safeguard in the rules had departed. The language itself had lost in richness, variety, harmony, and colour; it was an admirable instrument for the intellect, but was less apt to render sensations and passions; when employed for the loftier purposes of art it tended to the oratorical, with something of over-emphasis and strain. The contention of La Motte-Houdart that verse denaturalises and deforms ideas, expresses the faith of the time, and La Motte's own cold and laboured odes did not tend to refute his theory.

Chaulieu (1639–1720), the "poëte de la bonne compagnie," an anacreontic senior, patriarch of pleasure, survived the classical century, and sang his songs of facile, epicurean delights; his friend La Fare (1644–1712) survived, but slept and ate more than a songster should. Anthony Hamilton (1646?–1720) wrote graceful verses, and in his brilliant *Mémoires de la Vie du Comte de Gramont* became the historian of the amorous intrigues of the court of Charles II. Jean-Baptiste Rousseau (1670–1741), who in the days of Mme. de Maintenon's authority had in his sacred *Cantates* been pious by command, recompensed himself by retailing unbecoming epigrams—and for epigram he had a genuine gift—to the Society of the Temple. He manufactured odes with skill in the mechanism of verse, and carefully secured the fine disorder required in that form of art by factitious enthusiasm and the abuse of mythology and allegory. When Rousseau died, Lefranc de Pompignan mourned

for "le premier chantre du monde," reborn as the Orpheus of France, in a poem which alone of Lefranc's numerous productions—and by virtue of two stanzas—has not that sanctity ascribed to them by Voltaire, the sanctity which forbids any one to touch them. Why name their fellows and successors in the eighteenth-century art of writing poems without poetry?

Louis Racine (1692–1763), son of the author of *Athalie*, in his versified discourses on *La Grâce* and *La Réligion* was devout and edifying, but with an edification which promotes slumber. If a poet in sympathy with the philosophers desired to edify, he described the phenomena of nature as Saint-Lambert (1716–1803) did in his *Saisons*—"the only work of our century," Voltaire assured the author, "which will reach posterity." To describe meant to draw out the inventory of nature's charms with an eye not on the object but on the page of the Encyclopædia, and to avoid the indecency of naming anything in direct and simple speech. The *Seasons* of Saint-Lambert were followed by the *Months* (*Mois*) of Roucher (1745–94)—"the most beautiful poetic shipwreck of the century," said the malicious Rivarol—and by the *Jardins* of Delille (1738–1813). When Delille translated the *Georgics* he was saluted by Voltaire as the Abbé Virgil.[1] The *salons* heard him with rapture recite his verses as from the tripod of inspiration. He was the favourite of Marie-Antoinette. Aged and blind, he was a third with Homer and Milton. In death they crowned his forehead, and for three days the mourning crowd gazed on all that remained of their great poet. And yet Delille's *Jardins* is no better than a patchwork of carpet-gardening, in which the flowers are theatrical

[1] Or was this Rivarol's ironical jest?

paper-flowers. If anything lives from the descriptive poetry of the eighteenth century, it is a few detached lines from the writings of Lemierre.

The successor of J.-B. Rousseau in the grand ode was Écouchard Lebrun (1729–1807), rival of Pindar. All he wanted to equal Pindar was some forgetfulness of self, some warmth, some genuine enthusiasm, some harmony, a touch of genius; a certain dignity of imagination he exhibits in his best moments. If we say that he honoured Buffon and was the friend of André Chénier, we have said in his praise that which gives him the highest distinction; yet it may be added that if he often falsified the ode, he, like Rousseau, excelled in epigram. It was not the great lyric but *le petit lyrisme* which blossomed and ran to seed in the thin poetic soil. The singers of fragile loves and trivial pleasures are often charming, and as often they are merely frivolous or merely depraved. Grécourt; Piron; Bernard, the curled and powdered Anacreon; Bernis, Voltaire's "Babet la Bouquetière," King Frederick's poet of "sterile abundance"; Dorat, who could flutter at times with an airy grace; Bertin, born in the tropics, and with the heat of the senses in his verse; Parny, an estray in Paris from the palms and fountains of the Isle Bourbon, the "dear Tibullus" of Voltaire—what a swarm of butterflies, soiled or shining!

If two or three poets deserve to be distinguished from the rest, one is surely JEAN-BAPTISTE-LOUIS GRESSET (1709–77), whose parrot *Vert-Vert*, instructed by the pious Sisters, demoralised by the boatmen of the Loire, still edifies and scandalises the lover of happy badinage in verse; one is the young and unfortunate NICOLAS-JOSEPH-LAURENT GILBERT (1751–80), less unfortunate and less gifted than the legend makes him, yet luckless

enough and embittered enough to become the satirist of Academicians and philosophers and the society which had scorned his muse; and the third is JEAN-PIERRE CLARIS DE FLORIAN (1755–94), the amiable fabulist, who, lacking La Fontaine's lyric genius, fine harmonies, and penetrating good sense, yet can tell a story with pleasant ease, and draw a moral with gentle propriety.

In every poetic form, except comedy, that he attempted, Voltaire stands high among his contemporaries; they give us a measure of his range and excellence. But the two greatest poets of the eighteenth century wrote in prose. Its philosophical poet was the naturalist Buffon; its supreme lyrist was the author of *La Nouvelle Héloïse.*

III

In the history of French tragedy only one name of importance—that of Crébillon—is to be found in the interval between Racine and Voltaire. Campistron feebly, Danchet formally and awkwardly, imitated Racine; Duché followed him in sacred tragedy; La Grange-Chancel (author of the *Philippiques,* directed against the Regent) followed him in tragedies on classical subjects. If any piece deserves to be distinguished above the rest, it is the *Manlius* (1698) of La Fosse, a work—suggestive rather of Corneille than of Racine—which was founded on the *Venice Preserved* of Otway. The art of Racine languished in inferior hands. The eighteenth century, while preserving its form, thought to reanimate it by the provocatives of scenic decoration and more rapid and more convulsive action.

PROSPER JOLYOT DE CRÉBILLON (1674–1762), a diligent

reader of seventeenth-century romances, transported the devices of romance, its horrors, its pathetic incidents, its disguises, its surprises, its discoveries, into the theatre, and substituted a tragedy of violent situations for the tragedy of character. His *Rhadamiste et Zénobie* (1711), which has an air of Corneillean grandeur and heroism, notwithstanding a plot so complicated that it is difficult to follow, was received with unmeasured enthusiasm. To be atrocious within the rules was to create a new and thrilling sensation. Torrents of tears flowed for the unhappy heroine of La Motte's *Inès de Castro* (1723), secretly married to the Prince of Portugal, and pardoned only when the fatal poison is in her veins. Voltaire's effort to renovate classical tragedy was that of a writer who loved the theatre, first for its own sake, afterwards as an instrument for influencing public opinion, who conceived tragedy aright as the presentation of character and passion seen in action. His art suffered from his extreme facility, from his inability (except it be in *Zaïre*) to attain dramatic self-detachment, from the desire to conquer his spectators in the readiest ways, by striking situations, or, at a later date, by the rhetoric of philosophical doctrine and sentiment.

There is no one, with all his faults, to set beside Voltaire. Piron and Gresset are remembered, not by their tragedies, but each by a single comedy. Marmontel's Memoirs live; his tales have a faded glory; as for his tragedies, the ingenious stage asp which hissed as the curtain fell on his *Cléopâtre*, was a sound critic of their mediocrity. Lemierre, with some theatrical talent, wrote ill; as the love of spectacle grew, he permitted his William Tell to shoot the apple, and his widow of Malabar to die in flames upon the stage.

Saurin in *Spartacus* (1760) declaimed and dissertated in the manner of Voltaire. De Belloy at a lucky moment showed, in his *Siège de Calais* (1765), that rhetorical patriotism had survived the Seven Years' War; he was supposed to have founded that national, historic drama which the President Hénault had projected; but with the *Siège de Calais* the national drama rose and fell. Laharpe (1739–1803) was the latest writer who compounded classical tragedy according to the approved recipe. In the last quarter of the century Shakespeare became known to the French public through the translation of Letourneur. Before that translation began to appear, JEAN-FRANÇOIS DUCIS (1733–1816), the patron of whose imagination was his "Saint Guillaume" of Stratford, though he knew no English, had in a fashion presented Hamlet (1769) and Romeo and Juliet to his countrymen; King Lear, Macbeth, King John, Othello (1792) followed. But Ducis came a generation too soon for a true Shakespearian rendering; simple and heroic in his character as a man, he belonged to an age of philosophers and sentimentalists, an age of "virtue" and "nature." Shakespeare's translation is as strange as that of his own Bottom. Ophelia is the daughter of King Claudius; the Queen dies by her own hand; old Montague is a Montague-Ugolino who has devoured his sons; Malcolm is believed to be a mountaineer's child; Lear is borne on the stage, sleeping on a bed of roses, that he may behold a sunrise; Hédelmone (Desdemona) is no longer Othello's wife; Iago disappears; Desdemona's handkerchief is not among the properties; and Juliet's lark is voiceless. Eighteenth-century tragedy is indeed a city of tombs.

Comedy made some amends. Before the appearance

of Regnard, the actor Baron, Molière's favourite pupil, had given a lively play—*L'Homme à bonne Fortune* (1686). Jean-François Regnard (1655–1709) escaped from his corsair captors and slavery at Algiers, made his sorry company of knaves and fools acceptable by virtue of inexhaustible gaiety, bright fantasy, and the liveliest of comic styles. His *Joueur* (1696) is a scapegrace, possessed by the passion of gaming, whose love of Angélique is a devotion to her dowry, but he will console himself for lost love by another throw of the dice. His *Légataire Universel*, greedy, old, and ailing, is surrounded by pitiless rogues, yet the curtain falls on a general reconciliation. Regnard's morals may be doubtful, but his mirth is unquestionable.

Dancourt (1661–1725), with a far less happy style, had a truer power of observation, and as quick an instinct for theatrical effects; he exhibits in the *Chevalier à la Mode* and the *Bourgeoises à la Mode*, if not with exact fidelity, at least in telling caricature, the struggle of classes in the society around him, wealth ambitious for rank, rank prepared to sell itself for wealth. The same spirit of cynical gaiety inspires the *Double Veuvage* of Charles Rivière Dufresny (1655 ?–1724), where husband and wife, each disappointed in false tidings of the other's death, exhibit transports of feigned joy on meeting, and assist in the marriage of their respective lovers, each to accomplish the vexation of the other. Among such plays as these the *Turcaret* (1709) of Lesage appears as the creation of a type, and a type which verifies itself as drawn with a realism powerful and unfaltering.

In striking contrast with Lesage's bold and bitter satire are the comedies of Marivaux, delicate indeed in observation of life and character, skilled in their exploration of

the byways of the heart, brilliant in fantasy, subtle in sentiment, lightly touched by the sensuality of the day. Philippe Néricault Destouches (1680–1754) had the ambition to revive the comedy of character, and by its means to read moral lessons on the stage; unfortunately what he lacked was comic power. In his most celebrated piece, *Le Glorieux*, he returns to the theme treated by Dancourt of the struggle between the ruined noblesse and the aspiring middle class. Pathos and something of romance are added to comedy.

Already those tendencies which were to produce the so-called *comédie larmoyante* were at work. Piron (1689–1773), who regarded it with hostility, undesignedly assisted in its creation; *Les Fils Ingrats*, named afterwards *L'École des Pères*, given in 1728, the story of a too generous father of ungrateful children, a play designed for mirth, was in fact fitter to draw tears than to excite laughter. Piron's special gift, however, was for satire. In *La Métromanie* he smiles at the folly of the aspirant poet with all his cherished illusions; yet young Damis with his folly, the innocent error of a generous spirit, wins a sympathy to which the duller representatives of good sense can make no claim. It is satire also which gives whatever comic force it possesses to the one comedy of Gresset that is not forgotten: *Le Méchant* (1747), a disloyal comrade, would steal the heart of his friend's beloved; soubrette and valet conspire to expose the traitor; but Cléon, who loves mischief in the spirit of sport, though unmasked, is little disconcerted. Brilliant in lines and speeches, *Le Méchant* is defective in its composition as a whole.

The decline in a feeling for composition, for art, for the severity of outline, was accompanied by a development of

the emotional or sentimental element in drama. As sensibility was quickened, and wealth and ease increased, little things came to be felt as important. The middle class advanced in prosperity and power. Why should emperors and kings, queens and princesses occupy the stage? Why neglect the joys and griefs of every-day domestic life? If "nature" and "virtue" were to be honoured, why not seek them here? Man, the new philosophy taught, is essentially good; human nature is of itself inclined to virtue; if it strays through force of circumstance into vice or folly, should not its errors be viewed with sympathy, with tenderness? Thus comedy grew serious, and tragedy put off its exalted airs; the genius of tragedy and the genius of comedy were wedded, and the *comédie larmoyante*, which might be named more correctly the bourgeois drama, was born of this union.

In the plays of NIVELLE DE LA CHAUSÉE (1692–1754) the new type is already formed. The relations of wife and husband, of father and child, form the theme of all his plays. In *Mélanide*, father and son, unrecognised, are rivals in love; the wife and mother, supposed to be dead, is discovered; the husband returns to her arms, and is reconciled to his son. It is the victory of nature and of innate goodness; comic intention and comic power are wholly absent. La Chausée's morals are those of an optimist; but those modern domestic tragedies, the ethics of which do not err by over-sanguine views of human nature, may trace their ancestry to *Mélanide*.

For such serious comedy or bourgeois drama the appropriate vehicle, so Diderot maintained, is prose. Diderot, among his many gifts, did not possess a talent for dramatic writing. But as a critic his influence was

considerable. Midway between tragedy and comedy he perceived a place for the serious drama; to right and left, on either side of the centre, were spaces for forms approximating, the one to tragedy, the other to comedy. The hybrid species of tragi-comedy he wholly condemned; each genre, as he conceived it, is a unity containing its own principle of life. The function of the theatre is less to represent character fully formed than to study the natural history of character, to exhibit the environments which determine character. Its purpose is to moralise life, and the chief means of moralisation is that effusive sensibility which is the outflow of the inherent goodness of human nature.

Diderot attempted to justify his theory by examples, and only proved his own incapacity as a writer for the stage. His friend SEDAINE (1719–97) was more fortunate. Of the bourgeois drama of the eighteenth century, *Le Philosophe sans le savoir* alone survives. It is little more than a domestic anecdote rendered dramatic, but it has life and reality. The merchant Vanderk's daughter is to be married; but on the same day his son, resenting an insult to his father, must expose his life in a duel. Old Antoine, the intendant, would take his young master's place of danger; Antoine's daughter, Victorine, half-unawares has given her heart to the gallant duellist. Hopes and fears, joy and grief contend in the Vanderk habitation. Sedaine made a true capture of a little province of nature. When Mercier (1740–1814) tried to write in the same vein, his "nature" was that of declamatory sentiment imposed upon trivial incidents. Beaumarchais, in his earlier pieces, was tearful and romantic; happily he repented him of his lugubrious sentiment, and restored to France its old gaiety in the

Barbier de Séville and the inimitable *Mariage de Figaro*; but amid the mirth of *Figaro* can be heard the detonation of approaching revolutionary conflict.

IV

The history of the novel in the eighteenth century corresponds with the general movement of ideas; the novel begins as art, and proceeds to propagandism. ALAIN-RENÉ LESAGE, born at Sarzeau, near Vannes, in 1668, belongs as much to the seventeenth as to the eighteenth century. His life of nearly eighty years (died 1747) was the honourable life of a bourgeois, who was also a man of genius, and who maintained his own independence and that of his wife and children by the steadfast diligence of his pen. He was no passionate reformer, no preacher of ideas; he observed life and human nature with shrewd common-sense, seeing men in general as creatures in whom good and evil are mixed; his imagination combined and vivified all he had observed; and he recorded the results of his study of the world in a style admirable for naturalness and ease, though these were not attained without the careful practice of literary art.

From translations for the readers of fiction and for the theatre, he advanced to free adaptations, and from these to work which may be called truly original. Directed by the Abbé de Lyonne to Spanish literature, he endeavoured in his early plays to preserve what was brilliant and ingenious in the works of Spanish dramatists, and to avoid what was strained and extravagant. In his *Crispin Rival de son Maître* (1707), in which the

roguish valet aspires to carry off his master's betrothed and her fortune, he borrows only the idea of Mendoza's play; the conduct of the action, the dialogue, the characters are his own. His prose story of the same year, *Le Diable Boiteux*, owes but little to the suggestion derived from Guevara; it is, in fact, more nearly related to the *Caractères* of La Bruyère; when Asmodeus discloses what had been hidden under the house-roofs of the city, a succession of various human types are presented, and, as in the case of La Bruyère, contemporaries attempted to identify these with actual living persons.

In his remarkable satiric comedy *Turcaret*, and in his realistic novel *Gil Blas*, Lesage enters into full possession of his own genius. *Turcaret, ou le Financier*, was completed early in 1708; the efforts of the financiers to hinder its performance served in the end to enhance its brief and brilliant success. The pitiless amasser of wealth, Turcaret, is himself the dupe of a coquette, who in her turn is the victim of a more contemptible swindler. Lesage, presenting a fragment of the manners and morals of his day, keeps us in exceedingly ill company, but the comic force of the play lightens the oppression of its repulsive characters. It is the first masterpiece of the eighteenth-century *comédie de mœurs*.

Much of Lesage's dramatic work was produced only for the hour or the moment—pieces thrown off, sometimes with brilliance and wit, for the *Théâtres de la Foire*, where farces, vaudevilles, and comic opera were popular. They served to pay for the bread of his household. His great comedy, however, a comedy in a hundred acts, is the story of *Gil Blas*. Its composition was part of his

employment during many years; the first volumes appeared in 1715, the last volume in 1735. The question of a Spanish original for the story is settled—there was none; but from Spanish fiction and from Spanish history Lesage borrowed what suited his purpose, without in any way compromising his originality. To the picaresque tales (and among these may be noted a distant precursor of *Gil Blas* in the *Francion* of Charles Sorel) he added his own humanity, and in place of a series of vulgar adventures we are given a broad picture of social life; the comedy of manners and intrigue grows, as the author proceeds, into a comedy of character, and to this something of the historical novel is added. The unity of the book is found in the person of Gil Blas himself: he is far from being a hero, but he is capable of receiving all impressions; he is an excellent observer of life, his temper is bright, he is free from ill-nature; we meet in him a pleasant companion, and accompany him with sympathy through the amusing Odyssey of his varied career.

As a moralist Lesage is the reverse of severe, but he is far from being base. "All is easy and good-humoured," wrote Sir Walter Scott, "gay, light, and lively; even the cavern of the robbers is illuminated with a ray of that wit with which Lesage enlightens his whole narrative. It is a work which renders the reader pleased with himself and with mankind, where faults are placed before him in the light of follies rather than vices, and where misfortunes are so interwoven with the ludicrous that we laugh in the very act of sympathising with them." In the earlier portion incidents preponderate over character; in the close, some signs of the writer's fatigue appear. Of Lesage's other tales and translations, *Le Bachelier de Salamanque* (1736) takes deservedly the highest rank.

With Pierre Carlet de Chamblain de Marivaux (1688–1763) the novel ceases to be primarily a study of manners or a romance of adventures; it becomes an analysis of passions to which manners and adventures are subordinate. As a journalist he may be said to have proceeded from Addison; by his novels he prepared the way for Richardson and for Rousseau. His early travesties of Homer and of Fénelon's *Télémaque* seem to indicate a tendency towards realism, but Marivaux's realism took the form not so much of observation of society in its breadth and variety as of psychological analysis. If he did not know the broad highway of the heart, he traversed many of its secret paths. His was a feminine spirit, delicate, fragile, curious, unconcerned about general ideas; and yet, while untiring in his anatomy of the passions, he was not truly passionate; his heart may be said to have been in his head.

In the opening of the eighteenth century there was a revival of preciosity, which Molière had never really killed, and in the *salon* of Madame de Lambert, Marivaux may have learned something of his metaphysics of love and something of his subtleties or affectations of style. He anticipates the sensibility of the later part of the century; but sensibility with Marivaux is not profound, and it is relieved by intellectual vivacity. His conception of love has in it not a little of mere gallantry. Like later eighteenth-century writers, he at once exalts "virtue," and indulges his fancy in a licence which does not tend towards good morals or manners. His *Vie de Marianne* (1731–41), which occupied him during many years, is a picture of social life, and a study, sometimes infinitely subtle, of the emotions of his heroine; her genius for coquetry is finely allied to her maiden pride;

the hypocrite, M. de Climal—old angel fallen—is a new variety of the family of Tartufe. *Le Paysan Parvenu* (1735–36), which tells of the successes of one whom women favour, is on a lower level of art and of morals. Both novels were left unfinished; and while both attract, they also repel, and finally weary the reader.[1] Their influence was considerable in converting the romance of adventures into the romance of emotional incident and analysis.

The work of Marivaux for the stage is more important than his work in prose fiction. His comedy has been described as the tragedy of Racine transposed, with love leading to marriage, not to death. Love is his central theme—sometimes in conflict with self-love—and women are his protagonists. He discovers passion in its germ, and traces it through its shy developments. His plays are little romances handled in dramatic fashion; each records some delicate adventure of the heart. He wrote much for the Comédie-Italienne, where he did not suffer from the tyranny of rules and models, and where his graceful fancy had free play. Of his large repertoire, the most admirable pieces are *Le Jeu de l'Amour et du Hasard* (1730) and *Les Fausses Confidences* (1732). In the former the heroine and her chambermaid exchange costumes; the hero and his valet make a like exchange; yet love is not misled, and heroine and hero find each other through their disguises. In *Les Fausses Confidences* the young widow Araminte is won to a second love in spite of her resolve, and becomes the happy victim of her own tender heart and of the devices of her assailants. The "marivaudage" of Marivaux is sometimes a refined

[1] The twelfth part of *Marianne* is by Madam Riccoboni. Only five parts of the *Paysan* are by Marivaux.

and novel mode of expressing delicate shades and half-shades of feeling; sometimes an over-refined or over-subtle attempt to express ingenuities of sentiment, and the result is then frigid, pretentious, or pedantic. No one excelled him in the art, described by Voltaire, of weighing flies' eggs in gossamer scales.

The Abbé A.-F. Prévost d'Exiles (1697–1763) is remembered by a single tale of rare power and beauty, *Manon Lescaut*, but his work in literature was voluminous and varied. Having deserted his Benedictine monastery in 1728, he led for a time an irregular and wandering life in England and Holland; then returning to Paris, he gained a living by swift and ceaseless production for the booksellers. In his journal, *Le Pour et le Contre*, he did much to inform his countrymen respecting English literature, and among his translations are those of Richardson's *Pamela*, *Sir Charles Grandison*, and *Clarissa Harlowe*. Many of his novels are melodramatic narratives of romantic adventure, having a certain kinship to our later romances of Anne Radcliffe and Matthew Gregory Lewis, in which horror and pity, blood and tears abound. Sometimes, however, when he writes of passion, we feel that he is engaged in no sport of the imagination, but transcribing the impulsive speech of his own tumultuous heart. The *Mémoires d'un Homme de Qualité*, *Cléveland*, *Le Doyen de Killerine* are tragic narratives, in which love is the presiding power.

Manon Lescaut, which appeared in 1731, as an episode of the first of these, is a tale of fatal and irresistible passion. The heroine is divided in heart between her mundane tastes for luxury and her love for the Chevalier des Grieux. He, knowing her inconstancy and infirmity, yet cannot escape from the tyranny of the spell

which has subdued him ; his whole life is absorbed and lost in his devotion to Manon, and he is with her in the American wilds at the moment of her piteous death. The admirable literary style of *Manon Lescaut* is unfelt and disappears, so directly does it bring us into contact with the motions of a human heart.

In the second half of the eighteenth century, philosophy, on the one hand, invaded the novel and the short tale ; on the other hand it was invaded by a flood of sentiment. An irritated and irritating sensuality could accommodate itself either to sentiment or to philosophy. Voltaire's tales are, in narrative form, criticisms of belief or opinion which scintillate with ironic wit. His disciple, Marmontel, would "render virtue amiable" in his *Contes Moraux* (1761), and cure the ravage of passion with a canary's song. His more ambitious *Bélisaire* seems to a modern reader a masterpiece in the *genre ennuyeux*. His *Incas* is exotic without colour or credibility. Florian, with little skill, imitated the *Incas* and *Télémaque*, or was feebly idyllic and conventionally pastoral as a follower of the Swiss Gessner. Restif de la Bretonne could be gross, corrupt, declamatory, sentimental, humanitarian in turns or all together. Three names are eminent—that of Diderot, who flung his good and evil powers, mingling and fermenting, into his novels as into all else ; that of Rousseau, who interpreted passion, preached its restraints, depicted the charms of the domestic interior, and presented the glories of external nature in *La Nouvelle Héloïse ;* that of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, who reaches a hand to Rousseau on the one side, and on the other to Chateaubriand.

CHAPTER II

MONTESQUIEU—VAUVENARGUES—VOLTAIRE

I

THE author of *De l'Esprit des Lois* was as important in the history of European speculation as in that of French literature; but inevitable changes of circumstances and ideas have caused his influence to wane. His life was one in which the great events were thoughts. Charles-Louis de Secondat, Baron de MONTESQUIEU, was born in 1689 at La Brède, near Bordeaux. After his years of education by the Oratorians, which left him with something of scepticism in his intellect, and something of stoicism in his character, he pursued legal studies, and in 1716 became President of the Parliament of Bordeaux. The scientific researches of his day attracted him; investigating anatomy, botany, natural philosophy, the history of the earth, he came to see man as a portion of nature, or at least as a creature whose life is largely determined by natural laws. With a temper of happy serenity, and an admirable balance of faculties, he was possessed by an eager intellectual curiosity. "I spend my life," he said, "in examining; everything interests, everything surprises me."

Nothing, however, interested him so much as the phenomena of human society; he had no aptitude for

metaphysical speculations; his feeling for literature and art was defective; he honoured the antique world, but it was the Greek and Latin historians and the ideals of Roman virtue and patriotism which most deeply moved him. At the same time he was a man of his own generation, and while essentially serious, he explored the frivolous side of life, and yielded his imagination to the licence of the day.

With enough wit and enough wantonness to capture a multitude of readers, the *Lettres Persanes* (1721) contain a serious criticism of French society in the years of the Regency. It matters little that the idea of the book may have been suggested by the Siamese travellers of Dufresny's *Amusements;* the treatment is essentially original. Things Oriental were in fashion—Galland had translated the *Arabian Nights* (1704–1708)—and Montesquieu delighted in books of travel which told of the manners, customs, religions, governments of distant lands. His Persians, Usbek and Rica, one the more philosophical, the other the more satirical, visit Europe, inform their friends by letter of all the aspects of European and especially of French life, and receive tidings from Persia of affairs of the East, including the troubles and intrigues of the eunuchs and ladies of the harem. The spirit of the reaction against the despotism of Louis XIV. is expressed in Montesquieu's pages; the spirit also of religious freethought, and the reaction against ecclesiastical tyranny. A sense of the dangers impending over society is present, and of the need of temperate reform. Brilliant, daring, ironical, licentious as the *Persian Letters* are, the prevailing tone is that of judicious moderation; and already something can be discerned of the large views and wise liberality of the *Esprit des Lois*. The book is valuable

to us still as a document in the social history of the eighteenth century.

In Paris, Montesquieu formed many distinguished acquaintances, among others that of Mlle. de Clermont, sister of the Duke de Bourbon. Perhaps it was in homage to her that he wrote his prose-poem, which pretends to be a translation from the Greek, *Le Temple de Gnide* (1725). Its feeling for antiquity is overlaid by the artificialities, long since faded, of his own day—"naught remains," writes M. Sorel, "but the faint and subtle perfume of a *sachet* long hidden in a *rococo* cabinet." Although his publications were anonymous, Montesquieu was elected a member of the Academy in 1728, and almost immediately after this he quitted France for a long course of travel throughout Europe, undertaken with the purpose of studying the manners, institutions, and governments of foreign lands. At Venice he gained the friendship of Lord Chesterfield, and they arrived together in England, where for nearly two years Montesquieu remained, frequently hearing the parliamentary debates, and studying the principles of English politics in the writings of Locke. His thoughts on government were deeply influenced by his admiration of the British constitution with its union of freedom and order attained by a balance of the various political powers of the State. On Montesquieu's return to La Brède he occupied himself with that great work which resumes the observations and meditations of twenty years, the *Esprit des Lois*. In the history of Rome, which impressed his imagination with its vast moral, social, and political significance, he found a signal example of the causes which lead a nation to greatness and the causes which contribute to its decline. The

study made at this point of view detached itself from the more comprehensive work which he had undertaken, and in 1734 appeared his *Considérations sur les Causes de la Grandeur et de la Décadence des Romains.*

Bossuet had dealt nobly with Roman history, but in the spirit of a theologian expounding the course of Divine Providence in human affairs. Montesquieu studied the operation of natural causes. His knowledge, indeed, was incomplete, but it was the knowledge afforded by the scholarship of his own time. The love of liberty, the patriotic pride, the military discipline, the education in public spirit attained by discussion, the national fortitude under reverses, the support given to peoples against their rulers, the respect for the religion of conquered tribes and races, the practice of dealing at one time with only a single hostile power, are pointed out as contributing to the supremacy of Rome in the ancient world. Its decadence is explained as the gradual result of its vast overgrowth, its civil wars, the loss of patriotism among the soldiery engaged in remote provinces, the inroads of luxury, the proscription of citizens, the succession of unworthy rulers, the division of the Empire, the incursion of the barbarians; and in treating this portion of his subject Montesquieu may be said to be wholly original. A short *Dialogue de Sylla et d'Eucrate* may be viewed as a pendant to the *Considérations*, discussing a fragment of the subject in dramatic form. Montesquieu's desire to arrive at general truths sometimes led him to large conclusions resting on too slender a basis of fact; but the errors in applying his method detract only a little from the service which he rendered to thought in a treatment of history at least tending in the direction of philosophic truth.

The whole of his mind—almost the whole of his existence—is embodied in the *Esprit des Lois* (1748). It lacks the unity of a ruling idea; it is deficient in construction, in continuity, in cohesion; much that it contains has grown obsolete or is obsolescent; yet in the literature of eighteenth-century thought it takes, perhaps, the highest place; and it must always be precious as the self-revealment of a great intellect—swift yet patient, ardent yet temperate, liberal yet the reverse of revolutionary—an intellect that before all else loved the light. It lacks unity, because its author's mind was many-sided, and he would not suppress a portion of himself to secure a factitious unity. Montesquieu was a student of science, who believed in the potency of the laws of nature, and he saw that human society is the product of, or at least is largely modified by, natural law; he was also a believer in the power of human reason and human will, an admirer of Roman virtue, a citizen, a patriot, and a reformer. He would write the natural history of human laws, exhibit the invariable principles from which they proceed, and reduce the study of governments to a science; but at the same time he would exhibit how society acts upon itself; he would warn and he would exhort; he would help, if possible, to create intelligent and patriotic citizens. To these intentions we may add another—that of a criticism, touched with satire, of the contemporary political and social arrangements of France.

And yet again, Montesquieu was a legist, with some of the curiosity of an antiquary, not without a pride in his rank, interested in its origins, and desirous to trace the history of feudal laws and privileges. The *Esprit des Lois* is not a doctrinaire exposition of a theory, but the

record of a varied life of thought, in which there are certain dominant tendencies, but no single absolute idea. The forms of government, according to Montesquieu, are three — republic (including both the oligarchical republic and the democratic), monarchy, despotism. Each of these structural arrangements requires a principle, a moral spring, to give it force and action: the popular republic lives by virtue of patriotism, public spirit, the love of equality; the aristocratic republic lives by the spirit of moderation among the members of the ruling class; monarchy lives by the stimulus of honour, the desire of superiority and distinction; despotism draws its vital force from fear; but each of these principles may perish through its corruption or excess. The laws of each country, its criminal and civil codes, its system of education, its sumptuary regulations, its treatment of the relation of the sexes, are intimately connected with the form of government, or rather with the principle which animates that form.

Laws, under the several forms of government, are next considered in reference to the power of the State for purposes of defence and of attack. The nature of political liberty is investigated, and the requisite separation of the legislative, judicial, and administrative powers is exhibited in the example set forth in the British constitution. But political freedom must include the liberty of the individual; the rights of the citizen must be respected and guaranteed; and, as part of the regulation of individual freedom, the levying and collection of taxes must be studied.

From this subject Montesquieu passes to his theory, once celebrated, of the influence of climate and the soil upon the various systems of legislation, and especially

the influence of climate upon the slave system, the virtual servitude of woman, and the growth of political despotism. Over against the fatalism of climate and natural conditions he sets the duty of applying the reason to modify the influences of external nature by wise institutions. National character, and the manners and customs which are its direct expression, if they cannot be altered by laws, must be respected, and something even of direction or regulation may be attained. Laws in relation to commerce, to money, to population, to religion, are dealt with in successive books.

The duty of religious toleration is urged from the point of view of a statesman, while the discussions of theology are declined. Very noteworthy is the humble remonstrance to the inquisitors of Spain and Portugal ascribed to a Jew of eighteen, who is supposed to have perished in the last *auto-da-fé*. The facts of the civil order are not to be judged by the laws of the religious order, any more than the facts of the religious order are to be judged by civil laws. Here the great treatise might have closed, but Montesquieu adds what may be styled an historical appendix in his study of the origin and development of feudal laws. At a time when antiquity was little regarded, he was an ardent lover of antiquity; at a time when mediæval history was ignored, he was a student of the forgotten centuries.

Such in outline is the great work which in large measure modified the course of eighteenth-century thought. Many of its views have been superseded; its collections of facts are not critically dealt with; its ideas often succeed each other without logical sequence; but Montesquieu may be said to have created a method, if not a science; he brought the study of jurisprudence

and politics, in the widest sense, into literature, laicising and popularising the whole subject; he directed history to the investigation of causes; he led men to feel the greatness of the social institution; and, while retiring from view behind his work, he could not but exhibit, for his own day and for ours, the spectacle of a great mind operating over a vast field in the interests of truth, the spectacle of a great nature that loved the light, hating despotism, but fearing revolution, sane, temperate, wisely benevolent. In years tyrannised over by abstract ideas, his work remained to plead for the concrete and the historical; among men devoted to the absolute in theory and the extreme in practice, it remained to justify the relative, to demand a consideration of circumstances and conditions, to teach men how large a field of reform lay within the bounds of moderation and good sense.

The *Esprit des Lois* was denounced by Jansenists and Jesuits; it was placed in the Index, but in less than two years twenty-two editions had appeared, and it was translated into many languages. The author justified it brilliantly in his *Défense* of 1750. His later writings are of small importance. With failing eyesight in his declining years, he could enjoy the society of friends and the illumination of his great fame. He died tranquilly (1755) at the age of sixty-six, in the spirit of a Christian Stoic.

I

The life of society was studied by Montesquieu; the inward life of the heart was studied by a young moralist, whose premature loss was lamented with tender passion by Voltaire.

Luc de Clapiers, Marquis de VAUVENARGUES, though neither a thinker nor a writer of the highest order, attaches us by the beauty of his character as seen through his half-finished work, more than any other author of the earlier part of the eighteenth century. He was born (1715) at Aix, in Provence, received a scanty education, served in the army during more than ten years, retired with broken health and found no other employment, lived on modest resources, enjoyed the acquaintance of the Marquis de Mirabeau and the friendship and high esteem of Voltaire, and died in 1747, at the early age of thirty-two. His knowledge of literature hardly extended beyond that of his French predecessors of the seventeenth century. The chief influences that reached him came from Pascal, Bossuet, and Fénelon. His learning was derived from action, from the observation of men, and from acquaintance with his own heart.

The writings of Vauvenargues are the fragmentary *Introduction à la Connaissance de l'Esprit Humain*, followed by *Réflexions et Maximes* (1746), and a few short pieces of posthumous publication. He is a moralist, who studies those elements of character which tend to action, and turns away from metaphysical speculations. His early faith in Christianity insensibly declined and disappeared, but his spirit remained religious; he believed in God and immortality, and he never became a militant philosopher. He thought generously of human nature, but without extravagant optimism. The reason, acting alone, he distrusted; he found the source of our highest convictions and our noblest practice in the emotions, in the heart, in the obscure depths of character and of nature. Here, indeed, is Vauvenargues' originality. In an age of ill living, he conceived a

worthy ideal of conduct; in an age tending towards an exaggerated homage to reason, he honoured the passions: "Great thoughts come from the heart"; "We owe, perhaps, to the passions the greatest gains of the intellect"; "The passions have taught men reason."

Vauvenargues, with none of the violences of Rousseau's temperament, none of the excess of his sensibility, by virtue of his recognition of the potency of nature, of the heart, may be called a precursor of Rousseau. Into his literary criticism he carries the same tendencies: it is far from judicial criticism; its merit is that it is personal and touched with emotion. His total work seems but a fragment, yet his life had a certain completeness; he knew how to act, to think, to feel, and after great sufferings, borne with serenity, he knew how to die.

III

The movement of Voltaire's mind went with that of the general mind of France. During the first half of the century he was primarily a man of letters; from about 1750 onwards he was the aggressive philosopher, the social reformer, using letters as the vehicle of militant ideas.

Born in Paris in 1694, the son of a notary of good family, FRANÇOIS-MARIE AROUET, who assumed the name VOLTAIRE (probably an anagram formed from the letters of *Arouet l.j.*, that is *le jeune*), was educated by the Jesuits, and became a precocious versifier of little pieces in the taste of the time. At an early age he was introduced to the company of the wits and fine gentlemen who formed the sceptical and licentious Society of

the Temple. Old Arouet despaired of his son, who was eager for pleasure, and a reluctant student of the law. A short service in Holland, in the household of the French ambassador, produced no better result than a fruitless love-intrigue.

Again in Paris, where he ill endured the tedium of an attorney's office, Voltaire haunted the theatres and the *salons*, wrote light verse and indecorous tales, planned his tragedy *Œdipe*, and, inspired by old M. de Caumartin's enthusiasm for Henri IV., conceived the idea of his *Henriade*. Suspected of having written defamatory verses against the Regent, he was banished from the capital, and when readmitted was for eleven months, on the suspicion of more atrocious libels, a prisoner in the Bastille. Here he composed — according to his own declaration, in sleep—the second canto of the *Henriade*, and completed his *Œdipe*, which was presented with success before the close of 1718. The prisoner of the Bastille became the favourite of society, and repaid his aristocratic hosts by the brilliant sallies of his conversation.

A second tragedy, *Artémire*, afterwards recast as *Mariamne*, was ill received in its earlier form. Court pensions, the death of his father, and lucky financial speculations brought Voltaire independence. He travelled in 1722 to Holland, met Jean-Baptiste Rousseau on the way, and read aloud for his new acquaintance *Le Pour et le Contre*, a poem of faith and unfaith—faith in Deism, disbelief in Christianity. The meeting terminated with untimely wit at Rousseau's expense and mutual hostility. Unable to obtain the approbation for printing his epic, afterwards named *La Henriade*, Voltaire arranged for a secret impression, under the title *La Ligue*, at Rouen (1723),

whence many copies were smuggled into Paris. The young Queen, Marie Lecszinska, before whom his *Mariamne* and the comedy *L'Indiscret* were presented, favoured Voltaire. His prospects were bright, when sudden disaster fell. A quarrel in the theatre with the Chevalier de Rohan, followed by personal violence at the hands of the Chevalier's bullies, ended for Voltaire, not with the justice which he demanded, but with his own lodgment in the Bastille. When released, with orders to quit Paris, he thought of his acquaintance and admirer Bolingbroke, and lost no time in taking refuge on English soil.

Voltaire's residence in England extended over three years (1726–29). Bolingbroke, Peterborough, Chesterfield, Pope, Swift, Gay, Thomson, Young, Samuel Clarke were among his acquaintances. He discovered the genius of that semi-barbarian Shakespeare, but found the only reasonable English tragedy in Addison's "Cato." He admired the epic power of Milton, and scorned Milton's allegory of Sin and Death. He found a master of philosophy in Locke. He effected a partial entrance into the scientific system of Newton. He read with zeal the writings of those pupils of Bayle, the English Deists. He honoured English freedom and the spirit of religious toleration. In 1728 the *Henriade* was published by subscription in London, and brought the author prodigious praise and not a little pelf. He collected material for his *Histoire de Charles XII.*, and, observing English life and manners, prepared the *Lettres Philosophiques*, which were to make the mind of England favourably known to his countrymen.

Charles XII., like *La Ligue*, was printed at Rouen, and smuggled into Paris. The tragedies *Brutus* and *Ériphyle*,

both of which show the influence of the English drama, were coldly received. Voltaire rose from his fall, and produced *Zaïre* (1732), a kind of eighteenth-century French "Othello," which proved a triumph; it was held that Corneille and Racine had been surpassed. In 1733 a little work of mingled verse and prose, the *Temple du Goût*, in which recent and contemporary writers were criticised, gratified the self-esteem of some, and wounded the vanity of a larger number of his fellow-authors. The *Lettres Philosophiques sur les Anglais*, which followed, were condemned by the Parliament to be burnt by the public executioner. With other audacities of his pen, the storm increased. Voltaire took shelter (1734) in Champagne, at Cirey, the château of Madame du Châtelet.

Voltaire was forty years of age; Madame, a woman of intellect and varied culture, was twelve years younger. During fifteen years, when he was not wandering abroad, Cirey was the home of Voltaire, and Madame du Châtelet his sympathetic, if sometimes his exacting companion. To this period belong the dramas *Alzire*, *Zulime*, *L'Enfant Prodigue*, *Mahomet*, *Mérope*, *Nanine*. The divine Émilie was devoted to science, and Voltaire interpreted the Newtonian philosophy to France or discussed questions of physics. Many admirable pieces of verse—ethical essays in the manner of Pope, lighter poems of occasion, *Le Mondain*, which contrasts the golden age of simplicity with the much more agreeable age of luxury, and many besides—were written. Progress was made with the shameless burlesque on Joan of Arc, *La Pucelle*. In *Zadig* Voltaire gave the first example of his sparkling tales in prose. Serious historical labours occupied him—afterwards to be published—the *Siècle de Louis XIV.* and the

great *Essai sur les Mœurs.* In 1746, with the support of Madame de Pompadour, he entered the French Academy. The death of Madame du Châtelet, in 1749, was a cruel blow to Voltaire. He endeavoured in Paris to find consolation in dramatic efforts, entering into rivalry with the aged Crébillon.

Among Voltaire's correspondents, when he dwelt at Cirey, was the Crown Prince of Prussia, a royal *philosophe* and aspirant French poet. Royal flatteries were not more grateful to Voltaire than philosophic and literary flatteries were to Frederick. Personal acquaintance followed; but Frederick would not receive Madame du Châtelet, and Voltaire would not desert his companion. Now when Madame was dead, when the Pompadour ceased from her favours to the poet, when Louis turned his back in response to a compliment, Frederick was to secure his philosopher. In July 1750 Voltaire was installed at Berlin. For a time that city was "the paradise of *philosophes.*"

The *Siècle de Louis XIV.* was published next year. Voltaire's insatiable cupidity, his tricks, his tempers, his vindictiveness, shown in the *Diatribe du Docteur Akakia* (an embittered attack on Maupertuis), alienated the King; when "the orange" of Voltaire's genius "was sucked" he would "throw away the rind." With unwilling delays, and the humiliation of an arrest at Frankfort, Voltaire escaped from the territory of the royal "Solomon" (1753), and attracted to Switzerland by its spirit of toleration, found himself in 1755 tenant of the château which he named Les Délices, near Geneva, his "summer palace," and that of Monrion, his "winter palace," in the neighbourhood of Lausanne. His pen was busy: the tragedy *L'Orphelin de la Chine*, tales, fugitive verses, the poem on

the earthquake at Lisbon, with its doubtful assertion of Providence as a slender counterpoise to the certainty of innumerable evils in the world, pursued one another in varied succession. Still keeping in his hands Les Délices, he purchased in 1758 the château and demesne of Ferney on French soil, and became a kind of prince and patriarch, a territorial lord, wisely benevolent to the little community which he made to flourish around him, and at the same time the intellectual potentate of Europe.

Never had his brain been more alert and indefatigable. The years from 1760 to 1778 were years of incessant activity. Tragedy, comedy, opera, epistles, satires, tales in verse, *La Pucelle*,[1] *Le Pauvre Diable* (admirable in its malignity), literary criticism, a commentary on Corneille (published for the benefit of the great dramatist's grandniece), brilliant tales in prose, the *Essai sur les Mœurs et l'Esprit des Nations*, the *Histoire de l'Empire de Russie sous Pierre le Grand*, with other voluminous historical works, innumerable writings in philosophy, in religious polemics, including many articles of the *Dictionnaire Philosophique*, in politics, in jurisprudence, a vast correspondence which extended his influence over the whole of Europe—these are but a part of the achievement of a sexagenarian progressing to become an octogenarian.

His work was before all else a warfare against intolerance and in favour of free thought. The grand enemy of intellectual liberty Voltaire saw in the superstition of the Church; his word of command was short and uncompromising — *Écrasez l'Infâme*. Jean Calas, a Protestant of Toulouse, falsely accused of the murder of his son, who was alleged to have been converted to the Roman communion, was tortured and broken on

[1] First authorised edition, 1762; surreptitiously printed, 1755.

the wheel. Voltaire, with incredible zeal, took up the victim's cause, and finally established the dead man's innocence. Sirven, a Protestant, declared guilty of the murder of his Roman Catholic daughter, was beggared and banished; Voltaire succeeded, after eight years, in effecting the reversal of the sentence. La Barre was tortured and decapitated for alleged impiety. Voltaire was not strong enough to overpower the French magistracy supported now by the French monarch. He turned to Frederick with a request that he would give shelter to a colony of *philosophes*, who should through the printing-press make a united assault upon *l'Infâme*.

In the early days of 1778, Voltaire, urged by friends, imprudently consented to visit Paris. His journey was like a regal progress; his reception in the capital was an overwhelming ovation. In March he was ailing, but he rose from his bed, was present at a performance of his *Irène*, and became the hero and the victim of extravagant popular enthusiasm. In April he eagerly pleaded at the French Academy for a new dictionary, and undertook himself to superintend the letter A. In May he was dangerously ill; on the 26th he had the joy of learning that his efforts to vindicate the memory of the unfortunate Count Lally were crowned with success. It was Voltaire's last triumph; four days later, unshriven and unhouseled, he expired. Seldom had such a coil of electrical energy been lodged within a human brain. His desire for intellectual activity was a consuming passion. His love of influence, his love of glory were boundless. Subject to spasms of intensest rage, capable of malignant trickery to gain his ends, jealous, mean, irreverent, mendacious, he had yet a heart open to charity and pity,

a zeal for human welfare, a loyalty to his ruling ideas, and a saving good sense founded upon his swift and clear perception of reality.

Voltaire's mind has been described as "a chaos of clear ideas." It is easy to point out the inconsistencies of his opinions, yet certain dominant thoughts can be distinguished amid the chaos. He believed in a God; the arrangements of the universe require a designer; the idea of God is a benefit to society—if He did not exist, He must be invented. But to suppose that the Deity intervenes in the affairs of the world is superstition; He rules through general laws—His executive; He is represented in the heart of man by His viceroy —conscience. The soul is immortal, and God is just; therefore let wrong-doers beware. In *L'Histoire de Jenni* the youthful hero is perverted by his atheistic associates, and does not fear to murder his creditor; he is reconverted to theism, and becomes one of the best men in England. As to the evil which darkens the world, we cannot understand it; let us not make it worse by vain perplexities; let us hope that a future life will right the balance of things; and, meanwhile, let us attend to the counsels of moderation and good sense; let the narrow bounds of our knowledge at least teach us the lesson of toleration.

Applied to history, such ideas lead Voltaire, in striking contrast with Bossuet, to ignore the supernatural, to eliminate the Providential order, and to seek the explanation of events in human opinion, in human sentiments, in the influence of great men, even in the influence of petty accident, the caprice of *sa Majesté le Hasard.* In the epoch of classical antiquity—which Voltaire understood ill—man had advanced from barbarism to a con-

dition of comparative well-being and good sense; in the Christian and mediæval period there was a recoil and retrogression; in modern times has begun a renewed advance. In fixing attention on the *esprit et mœurs* of nations—their manners, opinions, institutions, sentiments, prejudices—Voltaire was original, and rendered most important service to the study of history. Although his blindness to the significance of religious phenomena is a grave defect, his historical scepticism had its uses. As a writer of historical narrative he is admirably lucid and rapid; nor should the ease of his narration conceal the fact that he worked laboriously and carefully among original sources. With his *Charles XII.*, his *Pierre le Grand*, his *Siècle de Louis XIV.*, we may class the *Henriade* as a piece of history; its imaginative power is not that of an epic, but it is an interpretation of a fragment of French history in the light of one generous idea—that of religious toleration.

Filled with destructive passion against the Church, Voltaire, in affairs of the State, was a conservative. His ideal for France was an intelligent despotism. But if a conservative, he was one of a reforming spirit. He pleaded for freedom in the internal trade of province with province, for legal and administrative uniformity throughout the whole country, for a reform of the magistracy, for a milder code of criminal jurisprudence, for attention to public hygiene. His programme was not ambitious, but it was reasonable, and his efforts for the general welfare have been justified by time.

As a literary critic he was again conservative. He belonged to the classical school, and to its least liberal section. He regarded literary forms as imposed from without on the content of poetry, not as growing from

within; passion and imagination he would reduce to the strict bounds of uninspired good sense; he placed Virgil above Homer, and preferred French tragedy to that of ancient Greece; from his involuntary admiration of Shakespeare he recoiled in alarm; if he admired Corneille, it was with many reservations. Yet his taste was less narrow than that of some of his contemporaries; he had a true feeling for the genius of the French language; he possessed, after the manner of his nation and his time, *le grand goût;* he honoured Boileau; he exalted Racine in the highest degree; and, to the praise of his discernment, it may be said that he discovered *Athalie.*

The spectacular effects of *Athalie* impressed Voltaire's imagination. In his own tragedies, while continuing the seventeenth-century tradition, he desired to exhibit more striking situations, to develop more rapid action, to enhance the dramatic spectacle, to add local colour. His style and speech in the theatre have the conventional monotonous pomp, the conventional monotonous grace, without poetic charm, imaginative vision, or those flashes which spring from passionate genius. When, as was frequently the case, he wrote for the stage to advocate the cause of an idea, to preach tolerance or pity, he attained a certain height of eloquence. Whatever sensibility there was in Voltaire's heart may be discovered in *Zaïre.* *Mérope* has the distinction of being a tragedy from which the passion of love is absent; its interest rests wholly on maternal affection. *Tancrède* is remarkable as an eighteenth-century treatment of the chivalric life and spirit. The Christian temper of tolerance and humanity is honoured in *Alzire.*

Voltaire's incomparable gift of satirical wit did not make him a writer of high comedy: he could be gro-

tesque without lightness or brightness. But when a sentimental element mingles with the comic, and almost obscures it, as in *Nanine* (a dramatised tale derived from Richardson's *Pamela*), the verse acquires a grace, and certain scenes an amiable charm. *Nanine*, indeed, though in dramatic form, lies close to those tales in verse in which Voltaire mingled happily his wisdom and his wit. "The philosophy of Horace in the language of La Fontaine, this," writes a critic, "is what we find from time to time in Voltaire." In his lighter verses of occasion, epigram, compliment, light mockery, half-playful, half-serious sentiment, he is often exquisite.

No part of Voltaire's work has suffered so little at the hands of time as his tales in prose. In his contributions to the satire of human-kind he learned something from Rabelais, something from Swift. It is the satire of good sense impatient against folly, and armed with the darts of wit. Voltaire does not esteem highly the wisdom of human creatures: they pretend to knowledge beyond their powers; they kill one another for an hypothesis; they find ingenious reasons for indulging their base or petty passions; their lives are under the rule of *sa Majesté le Hasard*. But let us not rage in Timon's manner against the human race; if the world is not the best of all possible worlds, it is not wholly evil. Let us be content to mock at the absurdity of the universe, and at the diverting, if irritating, follies of its inhabitants. Above all, let us find support in work, even though we do not see to what it tends; "Il faut cultiver notre jardin"—such is Voltaire's word, and the final word of Candide. With light yet effective irony, Voltaire preaches the lesson of good sense. When bitter, he is still gay; his sad little philosophy of existence is

uttered with an accent of mirth; his art in satirical narrative is perfect; he is not resigned; he is not enraged; he is indignant, but at the same time he smiles; there is always the last resource of blindly cultivating our garden.

In Voltaire's myriad-minded correspondence the whole man may be found — his fire, his sense, his universal curiosity, his wit, his malignity, his goodness, his Protean versatility, his ruling ideas; and one may say that the whole of eighteenth-century Europe presses into the pages. He is not only the man of letters, the student of science, the philosopher; he is equally interested in politics, in social reform, in industry, in agriculture, in political economy, in philology, and, together with these, in the thousand incidents of private life.

CHAPTER III

DIDEROT AND THE ENCYCLOPÆDIA—PHILOSOPHERS, ECONOMISTS, CRITICS—BUFFON

I

"WHEN I recall Diderot," wrote his friend Meister, "the immense variety of his ideas, the amazing multiplicity of his knowledge, the rapid flight, the warmth, the impetuous tumult of his imagination, all the charm and all the disorder of his conversation, I venture to liken his character to Nature herself, exactly as he used to conceive her—rich, fertile, abounding in germs of every sort . . . without any dominating principle, without a master, and without a God." No image more suitable could be found; and his works resemble the man, in their richness, their fertility, their variety, and their disorder. A great writer we can hardly call him, for he has left no body of coherent thought, no piece of finished art; but he was the greatest of literary improvisators.

DENIS DIDEROT, son of a worthy cutler of Langres, was born in 1713. Educated by the Jesuits, he turned away from the regular professions, and supported himself and his ill-chosen wife by hack-work for the Paris booksellers—translations, philosophical essays directed against revealed religion, stories written to suit the appetite for garbage. From deism he advanced to atheism.

Arguing in favour of the relativity of human knowledge in his *Lettre sur les Aveugles* (1749), he puts his plea for atheism into the lips of an English man of science, but the device did not save him from an imprisonment of three months.

In 1745 the booksellers, contemplating a translation of the English "Cyclopædia" of Chambers, applied to Diderot for assistance. He readily undertook the task, but could not be satisfied with a mere translation. In a Prospectus (1750) he indicated the design of the "Encyclopædia" as he conceived it: the order and connection of the various branches of knowledge should be set forth, and in dictionary form the several sciences, liberal arts, and mechanical arts should be dealt with by experts. The homage which he rendered to science expressed the mind of his time; in the honour paid to mechanical toil and industry he was in advance of his age, and may be called an organiser of modern democracy. At his request JEAN LE ROND D'ALEMBERT (1717–83) undertook the direction of the mathematical articles, and wrote the *Discours Préliminaire*, which classified the departments of human knowledge on the basis of Bacon's conceptions, and gave a survey of intellectual progress. It was welcomed with warm applause. The aid of Voltaire, Montesquieu, Rousseau, Buffon, Turgot, Quesnay, and a host of less illustrious writers was secured; but the vast enterprise excited the alarms of the ecclesiastical party; the Jesuits were active in rivalry and opposition; Rousseau deserted and became an enemy; D'Alembert, timid, and a lover of peace, withdrew. In 1759 the privilege of publication was revoked, but the Government did not enforce its own decree. Through all difficulties and dangers Diderot held his ground. One

day he wrote a fragment of the history of philosophy; the next he was in a workshop examining the construction of some machine: nothing was too great or too small for his audacity or his patience. To achieve the work, tact was needed as well as courage; at times he condescended to disguise his real opinions, striving to weather the storm by yielding to it. In 1765 his gigantic labours were substantially accomplished, though the last plates of the *Encyclopédie* were not issued until 1772. When all was finished, the scientific movement of the century was methodised and popularised; a barrier against the invasion of the past was erected; the rationalist philosophy, with all its truths and all its errors, its knowledge and its ignorance, had obtained its *Summa*.

But, besides this co-operative work, Diderot did much, and in many directions, single-handed, flinging out his thoughts with ardent haste, and often leaving what he had written to the mercies of chance; a prodigal sower of good and evil seed. Several of his most remarkable pieces came to light, as it were, by accident, and long after his death. His novel *La Religieuse* — influenced to some extent by Richardson, whom he superstitiously admired—is a repulsive exposure of conventual life as it appeared to him, and of its moral disorder. *Jacques le Fataliste*, in which the manner is coarsely imitated from Sterne, a book ill-composed and often malodorous, contains, among its heterogeneous tales, one celebrated narrative, the *Histoire de Mme. de la Pommeraye*, relating a woman's base revenge on a faithless lover. If anything of Diderot's can be named a masterpiece, it is certainly *Le Neveu de Rameau*, a satire and a character-study of the parasite, thrown into the form

of dialogue, which he handled with brilliant success; it remained unknown until the appearance of a German version (1805), made by Goethe from a manuscript copy.

In his *Salons*, Diderot elevated and enlarged the criticism of the pictorial art in France. His eye for colour and for contour was admirable; but it is less the technique of paintings that he studies than the subjects, the ideas, and the moral significance. Such criticism may be condemned as literary rather than artistic; it was, however, new and instructive, and did much to quicken the public taste. Diderot pleaded for a return to nature in the theatre; for a bourgeois drama, domestic tragedy and serious comedy, touched with pathos, studied from real life, and inspired by a moral purpose; for the presentation on the stage of "conditions" rather than individual types—that is, of character as modified by social environments and the habits which they produce. He maintained that the actor should rather possess than be possessed by his theme, should be the master rather than the slave of his sensibility.

The examples of dramatic art which Diderot gave in his own plays, the *Père de Famille* and the *Fils Naturel*, are poor affectations of a style supposed to be natural, and are patently doctrinaire in their design, laboured developments of a moral thesis. One piece in which he paints himself, *Est-il bon? Est-il méchant?* and this alone, falls little short of being admirable, and yet it fails of true success.

A coherent system of thought cannot be found in Diderot's writings, but they are pregnant with ideas. He is deist, pantheist, atheist; he is a materialist—one,

however, who conceives matter not as inert, but quick with force. He is edifying and sincere in his morality; and presently his morals become the doctrines of an anarchical licence. All the ideas of his age struggle within him, and are never reduced to unity or harmony; light is never separate in his nature from heat, and light and warmth together give rise to thoughts which are sometimes the anticipations of scientific genius; he almost leaps forward to some of the conclusions of Darwin. His great powers and his incessant energy were not directed to worldly prosperity. Diderot was never rich. The Empress Catherine of Russia magnificently purchased his library, and entrusted him with the books, as her librarian, providing a salary which to him was wealth. He travelled to St. Petersburg to thank her in person for her generous and delicate gift. But her imperial generosity was not greater than his own; he was always ready to lavish the treasures of his knowledge and thought in the service of others; no small fragment of his work was a free gift to his friends, and passed under their name; Holbach and Raynal were among his debtors.

His correspondence presents a vivid image of the man and of the group of philosophers to which he belonged; the letters addressed to Mlle. Volland, to whom he was devotedly attached during many years, are frank betrayals of his character and his life. Her loss saddened his last days, but the days of sorrow were few. In July 1784, Diderot died. His reputation and influence were from time to time enhanced by posthumous publications. Other writers of his century impressed their own personalities more distinctly and powerfully upon society; no other writer mingled his genius so com-

pletely with external things, or responded so fully and variously to the stimulus of the spirit of his age.

II

The French philosophical movement—the "Illumination"—of the eighteenth century, proceeds in part from the empiricism of Locke, in part from the remarkable development of physical and natural science; it incorporated the conclusions of English deism, and advanced from deism to atheism. An intellectual centre for the movement was provided by the *Encyclopédie;* a social centre was found in Parisian *salons.* It was sustained and invigorated by the passion for freedom and for justice asserting itself against the despotism and abuses of government and against the oppressions and abuses of the Church. The opposing forces were feeble, incompetent, disorganised. The methods of government were, in truth, indefensible; religion had surrendered dogma, and lost the austerity of morals; within the citadel of the Church were many professed and many secret allies of the philosophers.

While in England an apologetic literature arose, profound in thought and adequate in learning, in France no sustained resistance was offered to the inroad of free thought. Episcopal fulminations rolled like stage thunder; the Bastille and Vincennes were holiday retreats for fatigued combatants; imprisonment was tempered with cajoleries; the censors of the press connived with their victims. The Chancellor D'AGUESSEAU (1668–1751), an estimable magistrate, a dignified orator, maintained the old seriousness of life and morals, and received the

reward of exile. The good ROLLIN (1661–1741) dictated lessons to youth drawn from antiquity and Christianity, narrated ancient history, and discoursed admirably on a plan of studies with a view to form the heart and mind; an amiable Christian Nestor, he was not a man-at-arms. The Abbé Guenée replied to Voltaire with judgment, wit, and erudition, in his *Lettres de quelques Juifs* (1769), but it was a single victory in a campaign of many battles. The satire of Gilbert, *Le Dix-huitième Siècle*, is rudely vigorous; but Gilbert was only an angry youth, disappointed of his fame. Fréron, the "Wasp" (*frélon*) of Voltaire's *L'Écossaise*, might sting in his *Année Littéraire*, but there were sharper stings in satire and epigram which he must endure. Palissot might amuse the theatrical spectators of 1760 with his ridiculous philosophers; the *Philosophes* was taken smilingly by Voltaire, and was sufficiently answered by Morellet's pamphlet and the *bouts-rimés* of Marmontel or Piron. The *Voltairomanie* of Desfontaines is only the outbreak of resentment of the accomplished and disreputable Abbé against a benefactor whose offence was to have saved him from the galleys.

The sensationalist philosophy is inaugurated by JULIEN OFFRAY DE LA METTRIE (1709–51) rather than by Condillac. A physician, making observations on his own case during an attack of fever, he arrived at the conclusion that thought is but a result of the mechanism of the body. Man is a machine more ingeniously organised than the brute. All ideas have their origin in sensation. As for morals, they are not absolute, but relative to society and the State. As for God, perhaps He exists, but why should we worship this existence more than any other? The law of our being is to

seek happiness; the law of society is that we should not interfere with the happiness of others. The pleasure of the senses is not the only pleasure, but it has the distinction of being universal to our species.

La Mettrie, while opposing the spiritualism of Descartes, is more closely connected with that great thinker, through his doctrine that brutes are but machines, than with Locke. It is from Locke—though from Locke mutilated—that ÉTIENNE BONNOT DE CONDILLAC (1715–80) proceeds. All ideas are sensations, but sensations transformed. Imagine a marble statue endowed successively with the several human senses; it will be seen how perceptions, consciousness, memory, ideas, comparison, judgment, association, abstraction, pleasure, desire are developed. The *ego* is but the bundle of sensations experienced or transformed and held in recollection. Yet the unity of the *ego* seems to argue that it is not composed of material particles. Condillac's doctrine is sensationalist, but not materialistic. Condillac's disciple, the physician Cabanis (1757–1808), proceeded to investigate the nature of sensibility itself, and to develop the physiological method of psychology. The unnecessary soul which Condillac preserved was suppressed by Destutt de Tracy (1754–1836); his ideology was no more than a province of zoology.

The morals of the sensationalist school were expressed by CLAUDE-ADRIEN HELVÉTIUS (1715–71), a worthy and benevolent farmer-general. The motive of all our actions is self-love, that tendency which leads us to seek for pleasure and avoid pain; but, by education and legislation, self-love can be guided and trained so that it shall harmonise with the public good. It remained for a German acclimatised to Paris to compile the full

manifesto of atheistic materialism. At Holbach's hospitable table the philosophers met, and the air was charged with ideas. To condense these into a system was Holbach's task. Diderot, Lagrange, Naigeon may have lent their assistance, but PAUL-HENRY THIRY, BARON D'HOLBACH (1723–89) must be regarded as substantially the author of the *Système de la Nature* (1770), which the title-page prudently attributed to the deceased Mirabaud. What do we desire but that men should be happy, just, benevolent? That they may become so, it is necessary to deliver them from those errors on which political and spiritual despotism is founded, from the chains of tyrants and the chimeras of priests, and to lead them back from illusions to nature, of which man is a part. We find everywhere matter and motion, a chain of material causes and effects, nor can we find aught beside these. An ever-circulating system of motions connects inorganic and organic nature, fire and air and plant and animal; free-will is as much excluded as God and His miraculous providence. The soul is nothing but the brain receiving and transmitting motions; morals form a department of physiology. Religions and governments, as they exist, are based on error, and drive men into crime. But though Holbach "accommodated atheism," as Grimm puts it, "to chambermaids and hairdressers," he would not hurry forward a revolution. All will come in good time; in some happier day Nature and her daughters Virtue, Reason, and Truth will alone receive the adoration of mankind.[1]

Among the friends of Holbach and Helvétius was

[1] The Swiss naturalist Charles Bonnet (1720–93) endeavoured to reconcile his sensationalism with a religious faith and a private interpretation of Christianity.

C.-F. de Chassebœuf, Count de VOLNEY (1757–1820), who modified and developed the ethics of Helvétius. An Orientalist by his studies, he travelled in Egypt and Syria, desiring to investigate the origins of ancient religions, and reported what he had seen in colourless but exact description. In *Les Ruines, ou Méditations sur les Révolutions des Empires*, he recalls the past like "an Arab Ossian," monotonous and grandiose, and expounds the history of humanity with cold and superficial analysis clothed in a pomp of words. His faith in human progress, founded on nature, reason, and justice, sustained Volney during the rise and fall of the Girondin party.

A higher and nobler spirit, who perished in the Revolution, but ceased not till his last moment to hope and labour for the good of men, was J.-A.-N. de Caritat, Marquis de CONDORCET (1743–94). Illustrious in mathematical science, he was interested by Turgot in political economy, and took a part in the polemics of theology. While lying concealed from the emissaries of Robespierre he wrote his *Esquisse d'un Tableau Historique des Progrès de l'Esprit Humain*. It is a philosophy of the past, and almost a hymn in honour of human perfectibility. The man-statue of Condillac, receiving, retaining, distinguishing, and combining sensations, has gradually developed, through nine successive epochs, from that of the hunter and fisher to the citizen of 1789, who comprehends the physical universe with Newton, human nature with Locke and Condillac, and society with Turgot and Rousseau. In the vision of the future, with its progress in knowledge and in morals, its individual and social improvement, its lessening inequalities between nations and classes, the philosopher finds his consolation for all the calamities of

the present age. Condorcet died in prison, poisoned, it is believed, by his own hand.

The economists, or, as Dupont de Nemours named them, the physiocrats, formed a not unimportant wing of the philosophic phalanx, now in harmony with the Encyclopædic party, now in hostility. The sense of the misery of France was present to many minds in the opening of the century, and with the death of Louis XIV. came illusive hopes of amelioration. The Abbé de Saint-Pierre (1658–1743), filled with ardent zeal for human happiness, condemned the government of the departed Grand Monarch, and dreamed of a perpetual peace; among his dreams arose projects for the improvement of society which were justified by time. Boisguillebert, and Vauban, marshal of France and military engineer, were no visionary spirits; they pleaded for a serious consideration of the general welfare, and especially the welfare of the agricultural class, the wealth-producers of the community. To violate economic laws, Boisguillebert declared, is to violate nature; let governments restrain their meddling, and permit natural forces to operate with freedom.

Such was the doctrine of the physiocratic school, of which François Quesnay (1694–1774) was the chief. Let human institutions conform to nature; enlarge the bounds of freedom; give play to the spirit of individualism; diminish the interference of government—"laissez faire, laissez passer."[1] Agriculture is productive, let its burdens be alleviated; manufactures are useful but "sterile": honour, therefore, above all, to the tiller of the

[1] This phrase had been used by Boisguillebert and by the Marquis d'Argenson before Gournay made it a power. On D'Argenson (1694–1757), whose *Considérations sur le Gouvernement de la France* were not published until 1764, see the study by Mr. Arthur Ogle (1893).

fields, who hugs nature close, and who enriches humankind! The elder Mirabeau—"ami des hommes"—who had anticipated Quesnay in some of his views, and himself had learnt from Cantillon, met Quesnay in 1757, and thenceforth subordinated his own fiery spirit, as far as that was possible, to the spirit of the master. From the physiocrats—Gournay and Quesnay—the noble-minded and illustrious TURGOT (1727–81) derived many of those ideas of reform which he endeavoured to put into action when intendant of Limoges, and later, when Minister of Finance. By his *Réflexions sur la Formation et la Distribution des Richesses*, Turgot prepared the way for Adam Smith.

In 1770 the Abbé Galiani, as alert of brain as he was diminutive of stature, attacked the physiocratic doctrines in his *Dialogues sur le Commerce des Blés*, which Plato and Molière—so Voltaire pronounced—had combined to write. The refutation of the *Dialogues* by Morellet was the result of no such brilliant collaboration, and Galiani, proposed that his own unstatuesque person should be honoured by a statue above an inscription, declaring that he had wiped out the economists, who were sending the nation to sleep. The fame of his *Dialogues* was perhaps in large measure due to the party-spirit of the Encyclopædists, animated by a vivacious attack upon the physiocrats. The book was applauded, but reached no second edition.

An important body of articles on literature was contributed to the *Encyclopédie* by JEAN-FRANÇOIS MARMONTEL. As early as 1719 a remarkable study in æsthetics had appeared—the *Réflexions Critiques sur la Poésie et la Peinture*, by the Abbé Dubos. Art is conceived as a satisfaction of the craving for vivid

sensations and emotions apart from the painful consequences which commonly attend these in actual life. That portion of Dubos' work which treats of "physical causes in the progress of art and literature," anticipates the views of Montesquieu on the influence of climate, and studies the action of environment on the products of the imagination. In 1746 Charles Batteux, in his treatise *Les Beaux-Arts réduits à un même Principe*, defined the end of art as the imitation of nature—not indeed of reality, but of nature in its actual or possible beauty; of nature not as it is, but as it may be. The articles of Marmontel, revised and collected in the six volumes of his *Éléments de Littérature* (1787), were full of instruction for his own time, delicate and just in observation, as they often were, if not penetrating or profound. In his earlier *Poétique Française*—"a petard," said Mairan, "laid at the doors of the Academy to blow them up if they should not open"—he had shown himself strangely disrespectful towards the fame of Racine, Boileau, and the poet Rousseau.

The friend of Marmontel, Antoine-Léonard Thomas (1732–85), honourably distinguished by the dignity of his character and conduct, a composer of *Éloges* on great men, somewhat marred by strain and oratorical emphasis, put his best work into an *Essai sur les Éloges*. At a time when Bossuet was esteemed below his great deserts, Thomas—almost alone—recognised his supremacy in eloquence. As the century advanced, and philosophy developed its attack on religion and governments, the classical tradition in literature not only remained unshaken, but seemed to gain in authority. The first lieutenant of Voltaire, his literary "son," LAHARPE (1739–1803) represents the critical temper of

the time. In 1786 he began his courses of lectures at the Lycée, before a brilliant audience composed of both sexes. For the first time in France, instruction in literature, not trivial and not erudite, but suited to persons of general culture, was made an intellectual pleasure. For the first time the history of literature was treated, in its sequence from Homer to modern times, as a totality. Laharpe's judgments of his contemporaries were often misled by his bitterness of spirit; his mind was not capacious, his sympathies were not liberal; his knowledge, especially of Greek letters, was defective. But he knew the great age of Louis XIV., and he felt the beauty of its art. No one has written with finer intelligence of Racine than he in his *Lycée, ou Cours de Littérature*. As the Revolution approached he sympathised with its hopes and fears; the professor donned the *bonnet rouge*. The storm which burst silenced his voice for a time; in 1793 he suffered imprisonment; and when he occupied his chair again, it was a converted Laharpe who declaimed against philosophers, republicans, and atheists, the tyrants of reason, morals, art and letters.

The finest and surest judgment in contemporary literature was that of a gallicised German—MELCHIOR GRIMM (1723–1807). As Laharpe was bound in filial loyalty to Voltaire, so Grimm was in fraternal attachment to the least French of eighteenth-century French authors—Diderot. From a basis of character in which there was a measure of Teutonic enthusiasm and romance, his intellect rose clear, light, and sure, with no mists of sentiment about it, and no clouds of fancy. During thirty-seven years, as a kind of private journalist, he furnished princely and royal persons of Germany, Russia, Sweden,

Poland, with "Correspondence," which reflected as from a mirror all the lights of Paris to the remote North and East. His own philosophy, his political views, were cheerless and arid; but he could judge the work of others generously as well as severely. No one of his generation so intelligently appreciated Shakespeare; no one more happily interpreted Montaigne. By swift *aperçu*, by criticism, by anecdote, by caustic raillery, or serious record, he makes the intellectual world of his day pass before us and expound its meanings. The Revolution, the dangers of which he divined early, drove him from Paris. In bidding it farewell he wished that he were in his grave.

III

Buffon, whose power of wing was great, and who did not love the heat and dust of combat, soared smoothly above the philosophic strife. Born in 1707, at Montbard, in Burgundy, GEORGE-LOUIS LECLERC, created Comte de BUFFON by Louis XV., fortunate in the possession of riches, health, and serenity of heart and brain, lived in his domestic circle, apart from the coteries of Paris, pursuing with dignity and infinite patience his proper ends. The legend describes him as a pompous Olympian even in his home; in truth, if he was majestic—like a marshal of France, as Hume describes him—he was also natural, genial, and at times gay. His appointment, in 1739, as intendant of the Royal Garden, now the *Jardin des Plantes*, turned his studies from mathematical science to natural history.

The first volumes of his vast *Histoire Naturelle* ap-

peared in 1749; aided by Daubenton and others, he was occupied with the succeeding volumes during forty years, until death terminated his labours in 1788. The defects of his work are obvious — its want of method, its disdain of classification, its abuse of hypotheses, its humanising of the animal world, its pomp of style. But the progress of science, which lowered the reputation of Buffon, has again re-established his fame. Not a few of his disdained hypotheses are seen to have been the divinations of genius; and if he wrote often in the ornate, classical manner, he could also write with a grave simplicity.

In his *Discours de Réception*, pronounced before the French Academy in 1753, he formulated his doctrine of literary style, insisting that it is, before all else, the manifestation of order in the evolution of ideas; ideas alone form the basis and inward substance of style. Rejecting merely abstract conceptions as an explanation of natural phenomena, viewing classifications as no more than a convenience of the human intellect, refusing to regard final causes as a subject of science, he envisaged nature with a tranquil and comprehensive gaze, and with something of a poet's imagination. He perceived that the globe, in its actual condition, is the result of a long series of changes, and thereby he gave an impulse to sound geological study; he expounded the geography of species, and almost divined the theory of their transformation or variability; he recognised in some degree the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest; he regarded man as a part of nature, but as its noblest part, capable of an intellectual and moral progress which is not the mere result of physical laws.

Whatever may have been Buffon's errors as a thinker,

he enlarged the bounds of literature by annexing the province of natural history as Montesquieu had annexed that of political science. His vision of the universe was unclouded by passion, and part of its grandeur is derived from this serenity. He studied and speculated with absolute freedom, prepared to advance from his own ideas to others more in accordance with observed phenomena. "He desired to be," writes a critic, "and almost became, a pure intelligence in presence of eternal things." How could he concern himself with the strifes and passions of a day to whom the centuries were moments in the vast process of evolving change? In André Chénier he found a disciple who would fain have been the Lucretius of the new system of nature.

CHAPTER IV

ROUSSEAU—BEAUMARCHAIS—BERNARDIN DE SAINT-PIERRE—ANDRÉ CHÉNIER

I

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU the man is inseparable from Rousseau the writer; his works proceed directly from his character and his life. Born at Geneva in 1712, he died at Ermenonville in 1778. His childhood was followed by years of vagabondage. From 1732, the date of his third residence with Madame de Warens, until 1741, though his vagabondage did not wholly cease, he was collecting his powers and educating his mind with studies ardently pursued. During nine subsequent years in Paris, in Venice, and elsewhere, he was working his way towards the light; it was the period of his gayer writings, ballet, opera, comedy, and of the articles on music contributed to the *Encyclopédie:* he had not yet begun to preach and prophesy to his age. The great fourth period of his life, from 1749 to 1762, includes all his masterpieces except the *Confessions.* From 1762 until his death, while his temper grew darker and his reason was disturbed, Rousseau was occupied with apologetic and autobiographic writings.

His mother died in giving birth to Jean-Jacques. His father, a watchmaker, filled the child's head with the

follies of romances, which they read together, and gave him through Plutarch's Lives a sense of the exaltations of virtue. The boy's feeling for nature was quickened and fostered in the garden of the pastor of Bossey. From a notary's office, where he seemed an incapable fool, he passed under the harsh rule of an engraver of watches, learning the vices that grow from fear. At sixteen he fled, and found protection at Annecy, under Madame de Warens, a young and comely lady, recently converted to the Roman communion, frank, kind, gay, and as devoid of moral principles as any creature in the Natural History. Sent to Turin for instruction, Rousseau renounced his Protestant faith, and soon after found in the good Abbé Gaime the model in part of his Savoyard vicar. Some experience of domestic service was followed by a year at Annecy, during which Rousseau's talent as a musician was developed. From eighteen to twenty he led a wandering life—"starved, feasted, despaired, was happy." Rejoining Madame de Warens at Chambéry in 1732, he interested himself in music, physics, botany, and was more and more drawn towards the study of letters. He methodised his reading (1738–41), and passionately pursued a liberal system of self-education, literary, scientific, and philosophical.

Rousseau's relations with his *bonne maman*, Madame de Warens, had been troubled by the latest of her other loves. In 1741 he set off for Paris, bearing with him the manuscript of a new system of musical notation, which was offered to the Académie des Sciences, and was declared neither new nor useful for instrumentalists. An experiment in life as secretary to the French Ambassador at Venice closed, after fourteen months, with his abrupt dismissal. Again in Paris, Rousseau obtained celebrity by

his operas and comedies, was received in the *salons*, and associated joyously with Diderot, Marmontel, and Grimm. He arranged his domestic life by taking an illiterate and vulgar drudge, Thérèse Le Vasseur, for his companion ; their children were abandoned to the care of the Foundling Hospital.

In 1749 Diderot was a prisoner at Vincennes. Rousseau, on the road to visit his friend, read in the *Mercure de France* that the Academy of Dijon had proposed as the subject for a prize to be awarded next year the question, "Has the progress of arts and sciences contributed to purify morals ?" Suddenly a tumult of ideas arose in his brain and overwhelmed him ; it was an ecstasy of the intellect and the passions. With Diderot's encouragement he undertook his indictment of civilisation ; in 1750 the *Discours sur les Sciences et les Arts* was crowned. In accordance with his theory he proceeded to simplify his own life, intensifying his self-consciousness by singularities of assumed austerity, and playing the part (not wholly a fictitious one) of a moral reformer. Famous as author of the *Discours* and the opera *Le Devin de Village*, presented before the King, he returned to his native Switzerland, and there re-entered the Protestant communion. In 1754 he again competed for a prize at Dijon, on the question, "What is the origin of inequality among men, and is it authorised by the law of nature ?" Rousseau failed to obtain the prize, but the *Discours sur l'Inégalité* was published (1755) with a dedication to the Republic of Geneva. He had discovered in private property the source of all the evils of society.

In Switzerland Rousseau prepared a first redaction of his political treatise, the *Contrat Social*, and filled his

heart with the beauty of those prospects which form an environment for the lovers in his *Héloïse*. In 1756 he was established, through the kindness of Madame d'Épinay, in the Hermitage, near the borders of the forest of Montmorency. His delight in the woods and fields was great; his delight in Madame d'Houdetot, kinswoman of his hostess, was a more troubled passion. Quarrels with Madame d'Épinay, quarrels with Grimm and Diderot, estrangement from Madame d'Houdetot, closed the scene at the Hermitage.

Authorship, however, had its joys and consolations. The *Lettre à D'Alembert*, a censure of the theatre (1758), was succeeded by *La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761), by the *Contrat Social* (1762), and *Émile* (1762). The days at Montmorency which followed his departure from the Hermitage passed in calm. With the publication of *Émile* the storms began again. The book, condemned by the Sorbonne, was ordered by the Parliament to be burnt by the common executioner. Rousseau escaped imprisonment by flight. In Switzerland he could not settle near Voltaire. A champion for the doctrine of a providential order of the world, an enemy of the stage—especially in republican Geneva—Rousseau had flung indignant words against Voltaire, and Voltaire had tossed back words of bitter scorn. Geneva had followed Paris in its hostility towards Rousseau's recent publications; whose doing could it be except Voltaire's? He fled from his persecutors to Môtiers, where the King of Prussia's governor afforded him protection. Renewed quarrels with his countrymen, clerical intolerance, mob violence, an envenomed pamphlet from Voltaire, once more drove him forth. He took refuge on an island in the lake of Bienne, only to be expelled by the authorities of Berne.

Encouraged by Hume—"le bon David"—he arrived in January 1766 in London.

At Wootton, in the Peak of Derbyshire, Rousseau prepared the first five books of his *Confessions*. Within a little time he had assured himself that Hume was joined with D'Alembert and Voltaire in a triumvirate of persecutors to defame his character and render him an outcast; the whole human race had conspired to destroy him. Again Rousseau fled, sojourned a year at Trye-Château under an assumed name, and after wanderings hither and thither, took refuge in Paris, where, living meanly, he completed his *Confessions*, wrote other eloquent pieces of self-vindication, and relieved his morbid cerebral excitement by music and botanising rambles. The hospitality of M. de Girardin at Ermenonville was gladly accepted in May 1778; and there, on July 2, he suddenly died; suicide was surmised; the seizure was probably apoplectic.

Rousseau was essentially an idealist, but an idealist whose dreams and visions were inspired by the play of his sensibility upon his intellect and imagination, and therefore he was the least impersonal of thinkers. Generous of heart, he was filled with bitter suspicions; inordinately proud, he nursed his pride amid sordid realities; cherishing ideals of purity and innocence, he sank deep in the mire of imaginative sensuality; effeminate, he was also indomitable; an uncompromising optimist, he saw the whole world lying in wickedness; a passionate lover of freedom, he aimed at establishing the most unqualified of tyrannies; among the devout he was a free-thinker, among the philosophers he was the sentimentalist of theopathy. He stands apart from his contemporaries: they did homage to the understand-

ing; he was the devotee of the heart: they belonged to a brilliant society; he was elated, suffered, brooded, dreamed in solitude: they were aristocratic, at least by virtue of the intellectual culture which they represented; he was plebeian in his origin, and popular in his sympathies.

He became a great writer comparatively late in life, under the compulsion of a ruling idea which lies at the centre of all his more important works, excepting such as are apologetic and autobiographical: Nature has made man good and happy; society has made him evil and miserable. Are we, then, to return to a state of primitive savagery? No: society cannot retrograde. But in many ways we can ameliorate human life by approximating to a natural condition.

In the *Discours sur les Sciences et les Arts*, the *Discours sur l'Inégalité*, and the *Lettre à D'Alembert sur les Spectacles*, Rousseau pleads against the vices, the artificiality, the insincerities, the luxuries, the false refinements, the factitious passions, the dishonest pleasures of modern society. "You make one wish," wrote Voltaire, "to walk on all fours." By nature all men are born free and equal; society has rendered them slaves, and impounded them in classes of rich and poor, powerful and weak, master and servant, peasant and peer. Rousseau's conception of the primitive state of nature, and the origin of society by a contract, may not be historically exact—this he admits; nevertheless, it serves well, he urges, as a working hypothesis to explain the present state of things, and to point the way to a happier state. It exhibits property as the confiscation of natural rights; it justifies the sacred cause of insurrection; it teaches us to honour man as man, and the simple citizen more

than the noble, the scientific student, or the artist. Plain morals are the only safe morals. We are told that the theatre is a school of manners, purifying the passions; on the contrary, it irritates and perverts them; or it offers to ridicule the man of straightforward virtue, as Molière was not ashamed to do in his *Misanthrope*.

Having developed his destructive criticism against society as it is, Rousseau would build up. In the *Contrat Social* he would show how freedom and government may be conciliated; how, through the arrangements of society, man may in a certain sense return to the law of nature. "Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains;" yet social order, Rousseau declares, is sacred. Having resigned his individual liberty by the social pact, how may man recover that liberty? By yielding his individual rights absolutely to a self-governing community of which he forms a part. The *volonté générale*, expressing itself by a plurality of votes, resumes the free-will of every individual. If any person should resist the general will, he thereby sacrifices his true freedom, and he must be "forced to be free." Thus the dogma of the sovereignty of the people is formulated by Rousseau. Government is merely a delegation of power made by the people as sovereign for the uses of the people as subjects. In Rousseau's system, if the tyranny of the majority be established without check or qualification, at least equality is secured, for, in the presence of the sovereign people and its manifested will, each individual is reduced to the level of all his fellows.

La Nouvelle Héloïse, in the form of a romance, considers the purification of domestic manners. Richardson's novels are followed in the epistolary style of narration, which lends itself to the exposition of senti-

ment. The story is simple in its incidents. Saint-Preux's crime of passion against his pupil Julie resembles that of Abelard against Eloisa. Julie, like Eloisa, has been a consenting party. Obedient to her father's will, Julie marries Wolmar. In despair Saint-Preux wanders abroad. Wolmar offers him his friendship and a home. The lovers meet, are tried, and do not yield to the temptation. Julie dies a victim to her maternal devotion, and not too soon—"Another day, perhaps, and I were guilty!"

In 1757 Rousseau conceived the design of his romance. It might have been coldly edifying had not the writer's consuming passion for Madame d'Houdetot, awakening all that he had felt as the lover of Madame de Warens, filled it with intensity of ardour. In the first part of the romance, passion asserts the primitive rights of nature; in the second part, those rights are shown to be no longer rights in an organised society. But the ideal of domestic life exhibited is one far removed from the artificialities of the world of fashion: it is a life of plain duties, patriarchal manners, and gracious beneficence. Rousseau the moralist is present to rebuke Rousseau the sentimentalist; yet the sentimentalist has his own persuasive power. The emotion of the lovers is reinforced by the penetrating influences of the beauty of external nature; and both are interpreted with incomparable harmonies of style and poignant lyrical cries, in which the violin note outsoars the orchestra.

A reform of domestic life must result in a reform of education. Rousseau's ideal of education, capable of adaptations and modifications according to circumstances, is presented in his *Émile*. How shall a child be formed in accordance, not with the vicious code of an artificial

society, but in harmony with nature? Rousseau traces the course of Émile's development from birth to adult years. Unconstrained by swaddling-bands, suckled by his mother, the child enjoys the freedom of nature, and at five years old passes into the care of his father or his tutor. During the earlier years his education is to be negative: let him be preserved from all that is false or artificial, and enter upon the heritage of childhood, the gladness of animal life, vigorous delights in sunshine and open air; at twelve he will hardly have opened a book, but he will have been in vital relation with real things, he will unconsciously have laid the foundations of wisdom. When the time for study comes, that study should be simple and sound—no Babel of words, but a wholesome knowledge of things; he may have learnt little, but he will know that little aright; a sunrise will be his first lesson in cosmography; he may watch the workman in his workshop; he may practise the carpenter's trade; he may read *Robinson Crusoe*, and learn the lesson of self-help. Let him ask at every moment, "What is the good of this?" Unpuzzled by questions of morals, metaphysics, history, he will have grown up laborious, temperate, patient, firm, courageous.

At fifteen the passions are awake; let them be gently and wisely guided. Let pity, gratitude, benevolence be formed within the boy's heart, so that the self-regarding passions may fall into a subordinate place. To read Plutarch is to commune with noble spirits; to read Thucydides is almost to come into immediate contact with facts. The fables of La Fontaine will serve as a criticism of the errors of the passions.

And now Émile, at eighteen, may learn the sublime

mysteries of that faith which is professed by Rousseau's Savoyard vicar. A Will moves the universe and animates nature; that Will, acting through general laws, is guided by supreme intelligence; if the order of Providence be disturbed, it is only through the abuse of man's free-will; the soul is immaterial and survives the body; conscience is the voice of God within the soul; "dare to confess God before the philosophers, dare to preach humanity before the intolerant;" God demands no other worship than that of the heart. With such a preparation as this, Émile may at length proceed to æsthetic culture, and find his chief delight in those writers whose genius has the closest kinship to nature. Finally, in Sophie, formed to be the amiable companion and helpmate of man, Émile should find a resting-place for his heart. Alas, if she should ever betray his confidence!

The *Confessions*, with its sequels in the *Dialogues, ou Rousseau juge de Jean-Jacques*, and the *Rêveries du Promeneur Solitaire*, constitute an autobiographical romance. The sombre colours of the last six Books throw out the livelier lights and shades of the preceding Books. While often falsifying facts and dates, Rousseau writes with all the sincerity of one who was capable of boundless self-deception. He will reserve no record of shame and vice and humiliation, confident that in the end he must appear the most virtuous of men. As the utterance of a soul touched and thrilled by all the influences of nature and of human life, the *Confessions* affects the reader like a musical symphony in which various movements are interpreted by stringed and breathing instruments. If Rousseau here is less of the prophet than in his other writings, he is more of the great enchanter. Should a moral be drawn from the book, the author would have

us learn that nature has made man good, that society has the skill to corrupt him, and finally that it is in his power to refashion himself to such virtue as the world most needs and most impatiently rejects.

The influence of Rousseau cannot easily be over-estimated. He restored the sentiment of religion in an age of abstract deism or turbid materialism. He inaugurated a moral reform. He tyrannised over France in the person of his disciple Robespierre. He emancipated the passions from the domination of the understanding. He liberated the imagination. He caught the harmonies of external nature, and gave them a new interpretation.[1] He restored to French prose, colour, warmth, and the large utterance which it had lost. He created a literature in which all that is intimate, personal, lyrical asserted its rights, and urged extravagant claims. He overthrew the classical ideal of art, and enthroned the *ego* in its room.

II

The fermentation of ideas was now quickened by the new life of passion—passion social and democratic as the days of Revolution approached; passion also personal and private, which, welcomed as a sacred fire, too often made the inmost being of the individual a scene of agitating and desolating conflict.

The Abbé Raynal (1713–96) made his *Histoire des Deux Indes* a receptacle not only for just views and useful

[1] Among writers who fostered the new feeling for external nature, Ramond (1755–1827), who derived his inspiration, partly scientific, partly imaginative, from the Swiss Alps and the Pyrenees, deserves special mention.

information, but for every extravagance of thought and sentiment. "Insert into my book," he said to his brother philosophers, "everything that you choose against God, against religion, and against government." In the third edition appears a portrait of the author, posing theatrically, with the inscription, "To the defender of humanity, of truth, of liberty!" The *salons* caught the temper of the time. Voltairean as they were, disposed to set down Rousseau as an enthusiast or a charlatan, they could not resist the invasion of passion or of sensibility. It mingled with a swarm of incoherent ideas and gave them a new intensity of life. The incessant play of intellect flashed and glittered for many spirits over a moral void; the bitter, almost misanthropic temper of Chamfort's maxims and *pensées* may testify to the vacuity of faith and joy; sentiment and passion came to fill the void; to desire, to love, to pity, to suffer, to weep, was to live the true life of the heart.

Madame du Deffand (1697–1780) might oppose the demon of ennui with the aid of a cool temperament and a brilliant wit; at sixty-eight, whatever ardour had been secretly stored up in her nature escaped to lavish itself half-maternally on Horace Walpole. Her young companion and reader, who became a rival and robbed her *salon* of its brilliance, Mlle. de Lespinasse (1732?–76) might cherish a calm friendship for D'Alembert. When M. de Guibert came to succeed M. de Mora in her affections, she poured out the lava torrent of passion in those Letters which have given her a place beside Sappho and beside Eloisa. Madame Roland in her girlhood had been the ardent pupil of Rousseau, whose *Nouvelle Héloïse* was to her as a revelation from heaven. The first appearance in literature of Madame

Necker's amazing daughter was as the eulogist of Rousseau.

The intellect untouched by emotion may be aristocratic; passion and sentiment have popular and democratic instincts. "The Revolution was already in action," said Napoleon, "when in 1784 Beaumarchais's *Mariage de Figaro* appeared upon the stage." If Napoleon's words overstate the fact, we may at least name that masterpiece of comedy a symptom of the coming explosion, or even, in Sainte-Beuve's words, an armed Fronde.

Pierre-Augustin Caron, who took the name of BEAUMARCHAIS (1732–99), son of a watchmaker of Paris, was born under a merry star, with a true genius for comedy, yet his theatrical pieces were only the recreations of a man of affairs—a demon of intrigue—determined to build up his fortune by financial adventures and commercial enterprises. Suddenly in 1774–75 he leaped into fame. Defeated in a trial in which his claim to fifteen thousand livres was disputed, Beaumarchais, in desperate circumstances, made his appeal to public opinion in four *Mémoires*, which admirably united seriousness, gaiety, argument, irony, eloquence, and dramatic talent. "I am a citizen," he cried—"that is to say, something wholly new, unknown, unheard of in France. I am a citizen—that is to say, what you should have been two hundred years ago, what perhaps you will be twenty years hence." The word "citizen" sounded strange in 1774; it was soon to become familiar.

Before this incident Beaumarchais had produced two dramas, *Eugénie* and *Les Deux Amis*, of the tearful, sentimental, bourgeois type, yet with a romantic tendency, which distinguishes at least *Eugénie* from the bourgeois

drama of Diderot and of Sedaine. The failure of the second may have taught their author the wisdom of mirth; he abandoned his high dramatic principles to laugh and to evoke laughter. *Le Barbier de Séville*, developed from a comic opera to a comedy in five acts, was given, after long delays, in 1775. The spectators manifested fatigue; instantly the play reappeared in four acts, Beaumarchais having lost no time in removing the fifth wheel from his carriage. It delighted the public by the novelty of its abounding gaiety, a gaiety full and free, yet pointed with wit, a revolving firework scattering its dazzling spray. The old comic theme of the amorous tutor, the charming pupil, the rival lover, adorned with the prestige of youth, the intriguing attendant, was renewed by a dialogue which was alive with scintillating lights.

From the success of the *Barbier* sprang *Le Mariage de Figaro*. Completed in 1778, the royal opposition to its performance was not overcome until six years afterwards. By force of public opinion the watchmaker's son had triumphed over the King. The subject of the play is of a good tradition—a daring valet disputes the claim of a libertine lord to the possession of his betrothed. Spanish colour and Italian intrigue are added to the old mirth of France. From Regnard the author had learnt to entangle a varied intrigue; from Lesage he borrowed his Spanish costumes and decoration—Figaro himself is a Gil Blas upon the stage; in Marivaux he saw how women may assert themselves in comic action with a bright audacity. The *Mariage de Figaro* resumes the past; it depicts the present, as a social satire, and a painting of manners; it conveys into art the experience, the spirit, the temerity of Beaumarchais's adventurous life as a man

of the world; it creates characters—Almaviva, Suzanne, Figaro himself, the budding Chérubin. It is at the same time—or, rather, became through its public reception—a pamphlet in comedy which announces the future; it ridicules the established order with a sprightly insolence; it pleads for social equality; it exposes the iniquity of aristocratic privilege, the venality of justice, the greed of courtiers, the chicanery of politicians. Figaro, since he appeared in "The Barber of Seville," has grown somewhat of a moralist and a pedant; he must play the part of censor of society, he must represent the spirit of independent criticism, he must maintain the cause of intelligence against the authority of rank and station. Beaumarchais may have lacked elevation and delicacy, but he knew his craft as a dramatist, and left a model of prose comedy from which in later years others of his art and mystery made profitable studies. He restored mirth to the stage; he rediscovered theatrical intrigue; he created a type, which was Beaumarchais himself, and was also the lighter genius of France; he was the satirist of society; he was the nimble-feathered bird that foretells the storm.

III

Bernardin de Saint-Pierre connects Rousseau with Chateaubriand and the romantic school of the nineteenth century. The new feeling for external nature attained through him a wider range, embracing the romance of tropic lands; it acquired an element of the exotic; at the same time, descriptive writing became more vivid and picturesque, and the vocabulary for the

purposes of description was enlarged. He added to French literature a tale in which human passion and the sentiment of nature are fused together by the magic of genius; he created two figures which live in the popular imagination, encircled with a halo of love and sorrow.

Born at Havre in 1737, Bernardin, through his imagination, was an Utopian visionary, an idyllic dreamer; through his temper, an angry disputant with society. His life was a fantastic series of adventures. Having read as a boy the story of Crusoe, and listened to the heroic record of the travels and sufferings of Jesuit missionaries, his fancy caught fire; he would seek some undiscovered island in mid-ocean, he would found some colony of the true children of nature, far from a corrupt civilisation, peaceable, virtuous, and free.

In France, in Russia, he was importunate in urging his extravagant designs upon persons of influence. When the French Government in 1767 commissioned him to work in Madagascar, he believed that his dream was to come true, but a rude awakening and the accustomed quarrels followed. He landed on the Isle of France, purposing to work as an engineer, and there spent his days in gazing at the sea, the skies, the mountains, the tropical forests. All forms and colours and sounds and scents impressed themselves on his brain, and were transferred to his collection of notes. When, on returning to Paris, he published (1773) his *Voyage à l'Île de France*, the literature of picturesque description may be said to have been founded. Already in this volume his feeling for nature is inspired by an emotional theism, and is burdened by his sentimental science, which would exhibit a fantastic array of evi-

dences of the designs for human welfare of an amiable and ingenious Author of nature. Before the book appeared, Bernardin had made the acquaintance of Rousseau, then living in retirement, tormented by his diseased suspicions and cloudy indignations. To his new disciple Rousseau was in general gracious, and they rambled together, botanising in the environs of Paris.

For a time Bernardin himself was in a condition bordering upon insanity; but the crisis passed, and he employed himself on the *Études de la Nature*, which appeared in three volumes in 1784. The tale of *Paul et Virginie* was not included; for when the author had read it aloud, though ladies wept, the sterner auditors had been contemptuous; Thomas slumbered, and Buffon called for his carriage. The *Études* accumulate the grotesque notions of Bernardin with reference to final causes in nature: nature is benevolent and harmonious; society is corrupt and harsh; scientific truth is to be discovered by sentiment, and not by reason; the whole universe is planned for the happiness of man; the melon is large because it was designed for the family; the pumpkin is larger, because Providence intended that it should be shared with our neighbours. Providence, indeed, in a sceptical and mocking generation, suffered cruelly at the hands of its advocate. Yet Bernardin conveyed into his book a feeling of the rich and obscure life and energy of nature; his descriptive power is admirable. "He desired," says M. Barine, "to open the door for Providence to enter; in fact he opened the door for the great Pan," and in this he was a precursor of much that followed in literature.

Bernardin's fame was now established. In the senti-

mental reaction against the dryness of sceptical philosophy, in the return to a feeling for the poetical aspect of things, he was looked upon as a leader. In the fourth volume of *Études* (1788) he had courage to print the tale of *Paul et Virginie*. It is an idyll of the tropics, written with the moral purpose of contrasting the beneficent influence of nature and of feeling with the dangers and evils of civilised society and of the intellect. The children grow up side by side in radiant innocence and purest companionship; then passion makes its invasion of their hearts. The didactic commonplaces and the faded sentimentalities of the idyll may veil, but cannot hide, the genuine power of those pages which tell of the modest ardours of first love. An element of melodrama mingles with the tragic close. Throughout we do more than see the landscape of the tropics: we feel the life of external nature throbbing in sympathy with human emotion. Something was gained by Bernardin from the *Daphnis and Chloe* of Longus in the motives and the details of his story, but it is essentially his own. It had a resounding success, and among its most ardent admirers was Napoleon.

Bernardin married at fifty-five, and became the father of a Paul and a Virginie. On the death of his wife, whom he regarded as a faithful housekeeper, he married again, and his life was divided between the devotion of an old man's love and endless quarrels with his colleagues of the *Institut*. His later writings added nothing to his fame. *La Chaumière Indienne*—the story of a pariah who learns wisdom from nature and from the heart—has a certain charm, but it lacks the power of the better portions of *Paul et Virginie*. The *Harmonies de la Nature* is a feeble reflection of the *Études*. Chateaubriand, to

whom Bernardin was personally known, gave a grudging recognition of the genius of his precursor. Lamartine, in after years, was a more generous disciple. In January 1814 Bernardin died, murmuring the name of God; among the great events of the time his death was almost unnoticed.

IV

In the second half of the eighteenth century, aided by the labours of the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, came a revival of the study of antiquity and of the sentiment for classical art. The Count de Caylus (1692–1765), travelling in Italy and the East with the enthusiasm of an archæologist, presented in his writings an ideal of beauty and grace which was new to sculptors and painters of the time. The discovery of Pompeii followed, after an interval, the discovery of Herculaneum. The Abbé BARTHÉLEMY (1716–95) embodied the erudite delights of a lifetime in his *Voyage du Jeune Anacharsis en Grèce* (1788), which seemed a revelation of the genius of Hellenism as it existed four centuries prior to the Christian era. It was an ideal Greece—the Greece of Winckelmann and Goethe—unalterably gracious, radiantly calm, which was discovered by the eighteenth century; but it served the imaginative needs of the age. We trace its influence in the harmonious forms of Bernardin's and Chateaubriand's imagining, and in the marbles of Canova. A poet, the offspring of a Greek mother and a French father—André Chénier—a latter-day Greek or demi-Greek himself, and yet truly a man of his own century, interpreted this new ideal in literary art.

Born at Constantinople in 1762, ANDRÉ CHÉNIER was educated in France, travelled in Switzerland and Italy, resided as secretary to the French Ambassador for three weary years in England—land of mists, land of dull aristocrats—returned to France in 1790, ardent in the cause of constitutional freedom, and defended his opinions and his friends as a journalist. The violences of the Revolution drove him into opposition to the Jacobin party. In March 1794 he was arrested; on the 25th July, two days before the overthrow of Robespierre, André Chénier's head fell on the scaffold.

Only two poems, the *Jeu de Paume* and the *Hymne aux Suisses*, were published by Chénier; after his death appeared in journals the *Jeune Captive* and the *Jeune Tarentine;* his collected poems, already known in manuscript to lovers of literature, many of them fragmentary, were issued in 1819. The romantic school had come into existence without his aid; but under Sainte-Beuve's influence it chose to regard him as a predecessor, and during the years about 1830 he was studied and imitated as a master.

He belongs, however, essentially to the eighteenth century, to its graceful sensuality, its revival of antiquity, its faith in human reason, its comprehensive science of nature and of society. In certain of his poems suggested by public occasions he is little more than a disciple of Lebrun. His *Élégies* are rather Franco-Roman than Greek; these, together with beauties of their own, have the characteristic rhetoric, the conventional graces, the mundane voluptuousness of their age. His philosophical poem *Hermès*, of which we have designs and fragments, would have been the *De Rerum Natura* of an admiring student of Buffon.

In his *Églogues* and his epic fragments he is a Greek or a demi-Greek, who has learnt directly from Homer, from the pastoral and idyllic poets of antiquity, and from the Anthology. The Greece of Chénier's imagination is the ideal Greece of his time, more finely outlined, more delicately coloured, more exquisitely felt by him than was possible with his contemporaries in an age of prose. "It is the landscape-painter's Greece," writes M. Faguet, "the Greece of fair river-banks, of gracious hill-slopes, of comely groups around a well-head or a stream, of harmonious theories beside the voiceful sea, of dancing choirs upon the luminous heights, under the blue heavens, which lift to ecstasy his spirit, light as the light breathing of the Cyclades."

In the *Iambes*, inspired by the emotions of the Revolution during his months of imprisonment, Chénier united modern passion with the beauty of classic form; satire in these loses its critical temper, and becomes truly lyrical. In his versification he attained new and alluring harmonies; he escaped from the rhythmical uniformity of eighteenth-century verse, gliding sinuously from line to line and from strophe to strophe. He did over again for French poetry the work of the Pléiade, but he did this as one who was a careful student and a critic of Malherbe.

BOOK THE FIFTH

1789–1850

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CHAPTER I

THE REVOLUTION AND THE EMPIRE—MADAME DE STAËL—CHATEAUBRIAND

I

THE literature of the Revolution and the Empire is that of a period of transition. Madame de Staël and Chateaubriand announce the future; the writers of an inferior rank represent with declining power the past, and give some faint presentiment of things to come. The great political concussion was not favourable to art. Abstract ideas united with the passions of the hour produced poetry which was of the nature of a declamatory pamphlet. Innumerable pieces were presented on the stage, but their literary value is insignificant.

Marie-Joseph Chénier (1764–1811), brother of the great poet who perished on the scaffold, attempted to inaugurate a school of national tragedy in his *Charles IX.*; neither he nor the public knew history or possessed the historical sentiment—his tragedy was a revolutionary "school of kings." Arnault, Legouvé, Népomucène

Lemercier were applauded for their classic dignity, or their depth of characterisation, or their pomp of language. The true tragedy of the time was enacted in the streets and in the clubs. Comedy was welcome in days of terror as at all other times. Collin d'Harleville drew mirth from the infirmities and follies of old age in *Le Vieux Célibataire* (1792); Fabre d'Eglantine moralised Molière to the taste of Rousseau by exhibiting a Philante debased by egoism and accommodations with the world; Louis Laya, during the trial of the King, satirised the pretenders to patriotism in *L'Ami des Lois*, yet escaped the vengeance of the Jacobins.

Historical comedy, a novelty in art, was seen in Lemercier's *Pinto* (1799), where great events are reduced to petty dimensions, and the destiny of nations is satirically viewed as a vulgar game of trick-track. In his *Christophe Colomb* of 1809 he dared to despise the unities of time and place, and excited a battle, not bloodless, among the spectators. Exotic heroes suited the imperial régime. Baour-Lormian, the translator of *Ossian* (1801), converted the story of Joseph in Egypt into a frigid tragedy; Hector and Tippoo Sahib, Mahomet II., and Ninus II. (with scenes of Spanish history transported to Assyria) diversified the stage. The greatest success was that of Raynouard's *Les Templiers* (1805); the learned author wisely applied his talents in later years to romance philology. Among the writers of comedy—Andrieux, Étienne, Duval, and others—Picard has the merit of reproducing the life of the day, satirising social classes and conditions with vivacity and careless mirth. In melodrama, Pixérécourt contributed unconsciously to prepare the way for the romantic stage. Désaugiers, with his gift for gay plebeian song, was the master of the vaudeville.

Song of a higher kind had been heard twice or thrice during the Revolution. The lesser Chénier's *Chanson du Départ* has in it a stirring rhetoric for soldiers of the Republic sent forth to war with the acclaim of mother and wife and maiden, old men and little children. Lebrun-*Pindare*, in his ode *Sur le Vaisseau le Vengeur*, does not quite stifle the sense of heroism under his flowers of classical imagery. Rouget de Lisle's improvised verse and music, *La Marseillaise* (1792), was an inspiration which equally lent itself to the enthusiasm of victory and the gallantries of despair. The pseudo-epics and the descriptive poetry of the Empire are laboured and lifeless. But Creuzé de Lesser, in his *Chevaliers de la Table-Ronde* (1812) and other poems, and Baour-Lormian, in his *Poésies Ossianiques*, widened the horizons of literature. The *Panhypocrisiade* of Lemercier, published in 1819, but written several years earlier—an "infernal comedy of the sixteenth century"—is an amazing chaos of extravagance, incompetence, and genius; it bears to Hugo's *Légende des Siècles* the relation which the megatherium or mastodon may bear to some less monstrous analogues.

If we are to look for a presentiment of Lamartine's poetry, we may find it in the harmonious melancholy of Chênedollé, in the grace of Fontanes' stanzas, in the timid elegiac strains of Millevoye. The special character of the poetry of the Empire lies in its combination of the tradition derived from the eighteenth century, with a certain reaching-forth to an ideal, by-and-by to be realised, which it could not attain. Its comparative sterility is not to be explained solely or chiefly by the vigilance of the imperial censure of publications. The preceding century had lost the large feeling for

composition, for beauty and severity of form; attention was fixed upon details. If invention ceased to create, it must necessarily trick out what was commonplace in ingenuities of decorative periphrasis. Literature in the eighteenth century had almost ceased to be art, and had become a social and political weapon; under the imperial rule this militant function was withdrawn; what remained for literature but frigid ambitions or petty adornments, until a true sense of art was once again recovered?

The Revolution closed the *salons* and weakened the influence of cultivated society upon literature. Journalism and the pamphlet filled the place left vacant by the *salons*. The *Décade Philosophique* was the organ of the ideologists, who applied the conceptions of Condillac and his followers to literary and philosophical criticism. In 1789 the *Journal des Débats* was founded. Much ardour of feeling, much vigour of intellect was expended in the columns of the public press. Among the contributors were André Chénier, Mallet du Pin, Suard, Rivarol. With a little ink and a guillotine Camille Desmoulins hoped to render France happy, prosperous, and republican. Heady, vain, pleasure-loving, gay, bitter, sensitive, with outbreaks of generosity and moments of elevation, he did something to redeem his crimes and follies by pleas for justice and mercy in his journal, *Le Vieux Cordelier*, and died, with Danton as his companion, after a frenzy of resistance and despair.

The orators of the Revolution glorified doctrinaire abstractions, overflowed with sentimental humanity, and decorated their harangues with heroic examples of Roman virtue. The most abstract, colourless, and aca-

demic was Rousseau's disciple, who took the "Supreme Being" under his protection, Robespierre. The fervid spirit of the Girondins found its highest expression in Vergniaud, who, with infirm character, few ideas, and a hesitating policy, yet possessed a power of vibrating speech. Danton, the Mirabeau of the populace, was richer in ideas, and with sudden accesses of imagination thundered in words which tended to action; but in general the Mountain cared more for deeds than words. The young Saint-Just thrilled the Convention with icy apothegms which sounded each, short and sharp, like the fall of the knife. Barnave, impetuous in his temper, was clear and measured in discourse, and once in opposition to Mirabeau, defending the royal prerogative, rose beyond himself to the height of a great occasion.

But it was MIRABEAU, and Mirabeau alone, who possessed the genius of a great statesman united with the gifts of an incomparable orator. Born in 1749, of the old Riquetti family, impulsive, proud, romantic, yet clear of intellect and firmly grasping facts, a thinker and a student, calmly indifferent to religion, irregular in his conduct, the passionate foe of his father, the passionate lover of his Sophie and of her child, he had conceived, and in a measure comprehended, the Revolution long before the explosion came. Already he was a copious author on political subjects. He knew that France needed individual liberty and individual responsibility; he divined the dangers of a democratic despotism. He hoped by the decentralisation of power to balance Paris by the provinces, and quicken the political life of the whole country; he desired to balance the constitution by playing off the King against the Assembly, and the Assembly against the King, and to control the action of

each by the force of public opinion. From Montesquieu he had learnt the gains of separating the legislative, the executive, and the judicial functions. His hatred of aristocracy, enhanced by the hardship of imprisonment at Vincennes, led him to ignore an influence which might have assisted in the equilibration of power. As an orator his ample and powerful rhetoric rested upon a basis of logic; slow and embarrassed as he began to speak, he warmed as he proceeded, negligent of formal correctness, disdainful of the conventional classical decorations, magnificent in gesture, weaving together ideas, imagery, and passion. His speech, said Madame de Staël, was "like a powerful hammer, wielded by a skilful artist, and fashioning men to his will." At the sitting of the Assembly on April 2, 1791, the President announced, amid murmurs, "Ah! il est mort," which anticipated his words, that Gabriel-Honoré Riquetti was dead.

"The 18th Brumaire," writes M. Lanson, "silenced the orators. For fifteen years a solitary voice was heard, imperious but eloquent. . . . Napoleon was the last of the great Revolutionary orators." As he advanced in power he dropped the needless ornaments of rhetoric, and condensed his summons to action into direct, effective words, now simple and going straight at some motive of self-interest, now grandiose to seduce the imagination to his side. Speech with Napoleon was a means of government, and he knew the temper of the men whom he addressed. His own taste in literature was touched with sentimentality; *Ossian* and *Werther* were among his favourite books; but what may be styled the official literature of the Empire was of the decaying classical or neo-classical tradition.

Yet while the democratic imperialism was the direct

offspring of the Revolution with its social contract and its rights of man, it was necessary to combat eighteenth-century ideas and defend the throne and the altar. Great scientific names—Laplace, Bichat, Cuvier, Lamarck—testify to the fact that a movement which made the eighteenth century illustrious had not spent its force. Scholarship was laying the bases for future constructions; Ginguené published in 1811 the first volumes of his *Histoire Littéraire de l'Italie;* Fauriel and Raynouard accumulated the materials for their historical, literary, and philological studies. Philosophy was turning away from sensationalism, which seemed to have said its final word, towards spiritualist conceptions. Maine de Biran (1766–1824) found in the primitive fact of consciousness—the *nisus* of the will—and in the self-recognition of the *ego* as a cause, an escape from materialism. Royer-Collard (1763–1845), afterwards more distinguished in politics than he was in speculation, read for his class at the Sorbonne from the Scottish philosophy of Reid, and turned it by his commentary as a siege-train against the positions of Condillac.

The germs of new literary growths were in the soil; but the spring came slowly, and after the storms of Revolution were spent, a chill was in the air. Measureless hopes, and what had come of them? infinite desire, and so poor an attainment! A disciple of Rousseau, who shared in his sentiment without his optimistic faith, and who, like Rousseau, felt the beauty of external nature without Rousseau's sense of its joy, Étienne Pivert de SÉNANCOURT published in 1799 his *Rêveries*, a book of disillusion, melancholy atheism, and stoical resistance to sadness, a resistance which he was unable to sustain.

It was followed in 1804 by *Obermann*, a romance in epistolary form, in which the writer, disguised in the character of his hero, expresses a fixed and sterile grief, knowing not what he needs, nor what he loves, nor what he wills, lamenting without a cause and desiring without an object. The glories of Swiss landscape, which quicken his imagination, do not suffice to fill the void that is in his soul; yet perhaps in old age—if ever it come—he may resign himself to the infinite illusion of life. It is an indication of the current of the time that fifteen years later, when the *Libres Méditations* appeared, Sénancourt had found his way through a vague theopathy to autumnal brightness, late-born hope, and tranquil reconcilement with existence.

The work of the professional critics of the time—Geoffroy, De Féletz, Dussault, Hoffman—counts now for less than the words of one who was only an amateur of letters, and a moralist who never moralised in public. Joseph Joubert (1754–1824), the friend of Fontanes and of Chateaubriand, a delicate spirit, filled with curiosity for ideas, and possessing the finest sense of the beauty of literature, lacked the strength and self-confidence needful in a literary career. He read everything; he published nothing; but the *Pensées*, which were collected from his manuscripts by Chateaubriand, and his letters reveal a thinker who loved the light, a studious dilettante charmed by literary grace, a writer tormented by the passion to put a volume in a page, a page in a phrase, a phrase in a word. Plato in philosophy, Virgil in poetry, satisfy his feeling for beauty and refinement of style. From Voltaire and Rousseau he turns away, offended by their lack of moral feeling, of sanity, of wisdom, of delicacy. A man of the eighteenth century,

Joubert had lifted himself into thin clear heights of middle air, where he saw much of the past and something of the future; but the middle air is better suited for speculation than for action.

II

The movement towards the romantic theory and practice of art was fostered in the early years of the nineteenth century by two eminent writers—one a woman with a virile intellect, the other a man with more than a woman's imaginative sensibility—by GERMAINE DE STAËL and by Chateaubriand. The one exhibits the eighteenth century passing into the nineteenth, receiving new developments, yet without a breach of continuity; the other represents a reaction against the ideas of the age of the philosophers. Both opened new horizons—one, by the divinations of her ardent intelligence; the other, by his creative genius. Madame de Staël interpreted new ideas and defined a new theory of art. Chateaubriand was himself an extraordinary literary artist. The style of the one is that of an admirable improvisator, a brilliant and incessant converser; that of the other is at its best a miracle of studied invention, a harmony of colour and of sound. The genius of the one was quickened in brilliant social gatherings; a Parisian *salon* was her true seat of empire. The genius of the other was nursed in solitude by the tempestuous sea or on the wild and melancholy moors.

Germaine Necker, born in 1766, daughter of the celebrated Swiss banker and future minister of France, a child of precocious intelligence and eager sympathies

reared amid the brilliant society of her mother's *salon*, a girl whose demands on life were large—demands of the intellect, demands of the heart—enamoured of the writings of Rousseau, married at twenty to the Swedish Ambassador, the Baron de Staël-Holstein, herself a light and an inspirer of the constitutional party of reform in the early days of the Revolution, in her literary work opened fresh avenues for nineteenth-century thought. She did not recoil from the eighteenth century, but rather carried forward its better spirit. The Revolution, as a social upheaval, she failed to understand ; her ideal was liberty, not equality ; and Necker's daughter was assured that all would be well were liberty established in constitutional forms of government. A republican among aristocrats, she was an aristocrat among republicans. During the years of Revolutionary trouble, the years of her flights from Paris, her returns, excursions, and retreats, she was sustained by her zeal for justice, her pity for the oppressed, and her unquenchable faith in human progress.

A crude panegyric of Rousseau, certain political pamphlets, an *Essai sur les Fictions*, a treatise on the Influence of the Passions upon the Happiness of Individuals and Nations (1796), were followed in 1800 by her elaborate study, *De la Littérature considérée dans ses Rapports avec les Institutions Sociales*. Its central idea is that of human progress : freedom, incarnated in republican institutions, will assure the natural development of the spirit of man ; a great literature will be the offspring of progress and of freedom ; and each nation will lend its lights to other nations to illuminate the general advance. Madame de Staël hoped to cast the spell of her intellect over the young conqueror

Bonaparte; Bonaparte regarded a political meteor in feminine form with cold and haughty aversion. In 1802 the husband, whom she had never loved, was dead. Her passion for Benjamin Constant had passed through various crises in its troubled career—a series of attractions ending in repulsions, and repulsions leading to attractions, such as may be discovered in Constant's remarkable novel *Adolphe*. They could neither decide to unite their lives, nor to part for ever. Adolphe, in Constant's novel, after a youth of pleasure-seeking, is disenchanted with life; his love of Ellénore is that of one whose passions are exhausted, who loves for vanity or a new indulgence of egoism; but Ellénore, whose youth is past, will abandon all for him, and she imposes on him the tyranny of her devotion. Each is the other's torturer, each is the other's consolation. In the mastery of his cruel psychology Constant anticipates Balzac.

Madame de Staël lightened the stress of inward storm by writing *Delphine*, the story of a woman of genius, whose heroic follies bring her into warfare with the world. The lover of Delphine, violent and feeble, sentimental and egoistic, is an accomplice of the world in doing her wrong, and Delphine has no refuge but death in the wilds of America.[1]

In 1803 Madame de Staël received orders to trouble Paris with her torrent of ideas and of speech no longer. The illustrious victim of Napoleon's persecution hastened to display her ideas at Weimar, where Goethe protected his equanimity, as well as might be, from the storm of her approach, and Schiller endured her literary enthusiasm with a sense of prostration. August

[1] In the first edition, Delphine dies by her own hand.

Wilhelm von Schlegel, tutor to her sons, became the interpreter of Germany to her eager and apprehensive mind. Having annexed Germany to her empire, she advanced to the conquest of Italy, and had her Roman triumph. England, which she had visited in her Revolutionary flights, and Italy conspired in the creation of her novel *Corinne* (1807). It is again the history of a woman of genius, beautiful, generous, enthusiastic, whom the world understands imperfectly, and whom her English lover, after his fit of Italian romance, discards with the characteristic British phlegm. The paintings of Italian nature are rhetorical exercises ; the writer's sympathy with art and history is of more value ; the interpretation of a woman's heart is alive with personal feeling. Madame de Staël's novels are old now, which means that they once were young, and for her own generation they had the freshness and charm of youth.

Her father's death had turned her thoughts towards religion. A Protestant and a liberal, her spiritualist faith now found support in the moral strength of Christianity. She was not, like Chateaubriand, an epicurean and a Catholic ; she did not care to decorate religion with flowers, or make it fragrant with incense ; it spoke to her not through the senses, but directly to the conscience, the affections, and the will. In the chapters of her book on Germany which treat of "the religion of enthusiasm," her devout latitudinarianism finds expression.

The book *De l'Allemagne*, published in London in 1813, after the confiscation and destruction of the Paris edition by the imperial police, prepared the way by criticism for the romantic movement. It treats of manners, letters,

art, philosophy, religion, interpreting with astonishing insight, however it may have erred in important details, the mind of Germany to the mind of France. It was a Germany of poets, dreamers, and metaphysicians, loyal and sincere, but incapable of patriotic passion, disqualified for action and for freedom, which she in 1804 had discovered. The life of society produces literature in France; the genius of inward meditation and sentiment produces literature in Germany. The literature and art of the South are classical, those of the North are romantic; and since the life of our own race and the spirit of our own religion are infused into romantic art, it has in it possibilities of indefinite growth. Madame de Staël advanced criticism by her sense that art and literature are relative to ages, races, governments, environments. She dreamed of an European or cosmopolitan literature, in which each nation, while retaining its special characteristics, should be in fruitful communication with its fellows.

In 1811 Madame de Staël, when forty-five, became the wife of Albert de Rocca, a young Swiss officer, more than twenty years her junior. Their courage was rewarded by six years of happiness. Austria, Poland, Russia, Sweden, England were visited. Upon the fall of Napoleon Madame de Staël was once more in Paris, and there in 1817 she died. The *Dix Années d'Exil*, posthumously published, records a portion of her agitated life, and exhales her indignation against her imperial persecutor. The unfinished *Considérations sur la Révolution Française*, designed originally as an apology for Necker, defends the Revolution while admitting its crimes and errors; its true object, as the writer conceived—political liberty—had been in the end attained;

her ideal of liberty was indeed far from that of a revolutionary democracy; England, liberal, constitutional, with a system at once popular and aristocratic, was the country in which she saw her political aspirations most nearly realised.

III

François-René de Chateaubriand was born in 1768, at St.-Malo, of an ancient Breton family. Except for the companionship of an elder sister, of fragile health and romantic temper, his childhood was solitary. The presence of the old count his father inspired terror. The boy's society was with the waves and winds, or at the old château of Combourg, with lonely woods and wilds. Horace, Tibullus, *Télémaque*, the sermons of Massillon, nourished his imagination or stimulated his religious sentiment; but solitude and nature were his chief inspirers.

At seventeen he already seemed worn with the fatigue of unsatisfied dreaming, before he had begun to know life. A commission in the army was procured for him. He saw, interested yet alien in heart, something of literary life in Paris; then in Revolution days (1791) he quitted France, and, with the dream of discovering the North-West Passage, set sail to America. If he did not make any geographical discovery, Chateaubriand found his own genius in the western world. The news of the execution of Louis XVI. decided him to return; a Breton and a royalist should show himself among the ranks of the emigrants. To gratify the wish of his family, he married before crossing the frontier. Madame de Chateau-

briand had the dignity to veil her sorrow caused by an imperfect union, and at a later time she won such a portion of her husband's regard as he could devote to another than himself.

The episode of war having soon closed—not without a wound and a serious illness—he found a refuge in London, enduring dire poverty, but possessing the consolation of friendship with Joubert and Fontanes, and there he published in 1797 his first work, the *Essai sur les Révolutions*. The doctrine of human progress had been part of the religion of the eighteenth century; Chateaubriand in 1797 had faith neither in social, nor political, nor religious progress. Why be deceived by the hopes of revolution, since humanity can only circle for ever through an exhausting round of illusions? The death of his mother and words of a dying sister awakened him from his melancholy mood; he resolved to write a second book, which should correct the errors of the first, and exhibit a source of hope and joy in religion. To the eighteenth century Christianity had appeared as a gross and barbarous superstition; he would show that it was a religion of beauty, the divine mother of poetry and of art, a spring of poetic thought and feeling alike through its dogma and its ritual; he would convert literature from its decaying cult of classicism, and restore to honour the despised Middle Ages.

The *Génie du Christianisme*, begun during its author's residence in London, was not completed until four years later. In 1801, detaching a fragment from his poetic apology for religion, he published his *Atala, ou les Amours de Deux Sauvages dans le Désert*. It is a romance, or rather a prose poem, in which the magic of style, the enchantment of descriptive power, the large feeling for

nature, the sensibility to human passion, conceal many infirmities of design and of feeling. Chateaubriand suddenly entered into his fame.

On April 18, 1802, the Concordat was celebrated with high solemnities; the Archbishop of Paris received the First Consul within the portals of Notre-Dame. It was the fitting moment for the publication of the *Génie du Christianisme.* Its value as an argumentative defence of Christianity may not be great; but it was the restoration of religion to art, it contained or implied a new system of æsthetics, it was a glorification of devout sentiment, it was a pompous manifesto of romanticism, it recovered a lost ideal of beauty. From Ronsard to Chénier the aim of art had been to imitate the ancients, while imitating or interpreting life. Let us be national, let us be modern, let us therefore be Christians, declared Chateaubriand, and let us seek for our tradition in the great Christian ages. It was a revolution in art for which he pleaded, and throughout the first half of the nineteenth century the revolution was in active progress.

The episode of *René*, which was included in the *Génie*, and afterwards published separately, has been described as a Christianised *Werther;* its passion is less frank, and even more remote from sanity of feeling, than that of Goethe's novel, but the sadness of the hero is more magnificently posed. A sprightly English lady described Chateaubriand as "wearing his heart in a sling"; he did so during his whole life; and through René we divine the inventor of René carrying his wounded heart, as in the heroine we can discern some features of his sister Lucile. In all his writings his feelings centre in himself: he is a pure egoist through his sensibility; but

around his own figure his imagination, marvellous in its expansive power, can deploy boundless perspectives.

Both *Atala* and *René*, though brought into connection with the *Génie du Christianisme*, are in fact more closely related to the prose epic *Les Natchez*, written early, but held in reserve until the publication of his collected works in 1826–31. *Les Natchez*, inspired by Chateaubriand's American travels, idealises the life of the Red Indian tribes. The later books, where he escapes from the pseudo-epic manner, have in them the finest spirit of his early years, his splendour and delicacy of description, his wealth of imaginative reverie. Famous as the author of the *Génie*, Chateaubriand was appointed secretary to the embassy at Rome. The murder of the Duc d'Enghien alienated him from Napoleon. Putting aside the *Martyrs*, on which he had been engaged, he sought for fresh imagery and local colour to enrich his work, in a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, a record of which was published in his (1811) *Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem*.

The *Martyrs* appeared in 1809. It was designed as a great example of that art, inspired by Christianity, on behalf of which he had contended in the *Génie;* the religion of Christ, he would prove, can create passions and types of character better suited for noble imaginative treatment than those of paganism; its supernatural marvels are more than a compensation for the loss of pagan mythology. The time chosen for his epopee in prose is the reign of the persecutor Diocletian; Rome and the provinces of the Empire, Gaul, Egypt, the deserts of the Thebaid, Jerusalem, Sparta, Athens, form only portions of the scene; heaven and hell are open to the reader, but Chateaubriand, whose faith was rather a sentiment than a passion, does not succeed in making

his supernatural habitations and personages credible even to the fancy. Far more admirable are many of the terrestrial scenes and narrations, and among these, in particular the story of Eudore.

In the course of the travels which led him to Jerusalem, Chateaubriand had visited Spain, and it was his recollections of the Alhambra that moved him to write, about 1809, the *Aventures du Dernier des Abencérages*, published many years later. It shows a tendency towards self-restraint, excellent in itself, but not entirely in harmony with his effusive imagination. With this work Chateaubriand's inventive period of authorship closed; the rest of his life was in the main that of a politician. From the position of an unqualified royalist (1814–24) he advanced to that of a liberal, and after 1830 may be described as both royalist and republican. His pamphlet of 1814, *De Bonaparte et des Bourbons*, was declared by Louis XVIII. to be worth an army to his cause.

In his later years he published an *Essai sur la Littérature Anglaise* and a translation of "Paradise Lost." But his chief task was the revision of the *Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe*, an autobiography designed for posthumous publication, and actually issued in the pages of the *Presse*, through the indiscreet haste of the publishers, while Chateaubriand was still living. Its egotism, its vanity, its malicious wit, its fierce reprisals on those whom the writer regarded as his enemies, its many beauties, its brilliance of style, make it an exposure of all that was worst and much of what was best in his character and genius. Tended by his old friend Mme. Récamier, to whom, if to any one, he was sincerely attached, Chateaubriand died in the summer of 1848.

His tomb is on the rocky islet of Grand-Bé, off the coast of Brittany.

Chateaubriand cannot be loved, and his character cannot be admired without grave reserves. But an unique genius, developed at a fortunate time, enabled him to play a most significant part in the history of literature. He was the greatest of landscape painters; he restored to art the sentiment of religion; he interpreted the romantic melancholy of the age. If he posed magnificently, there were native impulses which suggested the pose; and at times, as in the *Itinéraire*, the pose is entirely forgotten. His range of ideas is not extraordinary; but vision, imagination, and the passion which makes the imaginative power its instrument, were his in a supereminent degree.

CHAPTER II

THE CONFLICT OF IDEAS

WHILE the imagination of France was turning toward the romance of the Middle Ages and the art of Christianity, Hellenic scholarship was maintained by Jean-François Boissonade. The representative of Hellenism in modern letters was Courier, a brave but undisciplined artillery officer under Napoleon, who loved the sight of a Greek manuscript better than he loved a victory. PAUL LOUIS COURIER DE MÉRÉ (1772–1825) counts for nothing in the history of French thought; in the history of French letters his pamphlets remain as masterpieces of Attic grace, luminous, light and bright in narrative, easy in dialogue, of the finest irony in comment, impeccable in measure and in malice. The translator of *Daphnis and Chloe*, wearied by war and wanderings in Italy, lived under the Restoration among his vines at Veretz in Touraine. In 1816 he became the advocate of provincial popular rights against the vexations of the Royalist reaction. He is a vine-dresser, a rustic bourgeois, occupied with affairs of the parish. Shall Chambord be purchased for the Duke of Burgundy? shall an intolerant young *curé* forbid the villagers to dance? shall magistrates harass the humble folk? Such are the questions agitating the country-side, which the vine-dresser Courier will resolve. The questions have been replaced

to-day by others; but nothing has quite replaced the *Simple Discours*, the *Pétition pour les Villageois*, the *Pamphlet des Pamphlets*, in which the ease of the best sixteenth and seventeenth century prose is united with a deft rapier-play like that of Voltaire, and with the lucidity of the writer's classical models.

Chateaubriand's artistic and sentimental Catholicism was the satisfaction of imaginative cravings. When JOSEPH DE MAISTRE (1753–1821) revolted against the eighteenth century, it was a revolt of the soul; when he assailed the authority of the individual reason, it was in the name of a higher reason. Son of the President of the Senate of Savoy, he saw his country invaded by the French Republican soldiery in 1792, and he retired to Lausanne. He protested against the Revolutionary aggression in his *Lettres d'un Royaliste Savoisien;* inspired by the mystical Saint-Martin, in his *Considérations sur la France*, he interpreted the meaning of the great political cataclysm as the Divine judgment upon France —assigned by God the place of the leader of Christendom, the eldest daughter of the Church—for her faithlessness and proud self-will. The sacred chastisement accomplished, monarchy and Catholicism must be restored to an intact and regenerated country. During fifteen years Maistre served the King of Sardinia as envoy and plenipotentiary at the Russian Court, maintaining his dignity in cruel distress upon the salary of a clerk. Amiable in his private life, he was remorseless—with the stern charity of an inquisitor—in dogma. In a style of extraordinary clearness and force he expounded a system of ideas, logically connected, on which to base a complete reorganisation of European society. Those ideas are set forth most powerfully in the dialogues entitled *Les Soirées*

de Saint-Pétersbourg and the treatises *Du Pape* and *De l'Église Gallicane.*

He honours reason; not the individual reason, source of innumerable errors, but the general reason, which, emanating from God, reveals universal and immutable truth—*quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus.* To commence philosophising we should despise the philosophers. Of these, Bacon, to whose errors Maistre devotes a special study, is the most dangerous; Locke is the most contemptible. The eighteenth century spoke of nature; Maistre speaks of God, the Grand Monarch who rules His worlds by laws which are flexible in His hands. To punish is the prime duty of authority; the great Justiciary avenges Himself on the whole offending race of men; there is no government without an executioner. But God is pitiful, and allows us the refuge of prayer and sacrifice. Without religion there is no society; without the Catholic Church there is no religion; without the sovereign Pontiff there is no Catholic Church. The sovereignty of the Pope is therefore the keystone of civilisation; his it is to give and take away the crowns of kings. Governments absolute over the people, the Pontiff absolute over governments—such is the earthly reflection of the Divine monarchy in heaven. To suppose that men can begin the world anew from a Revolutionary year One, is the folly of private reason; society is an organism which grows under providential laws; revolutions are the expiation for sins. Such are the ideas which Maistre bound together in serried logic, and deployed with the mastery of an intellectual tactician. The recoil from individualism to authority could not have found a more absolute expression.

The Vicomte de Bonald (1754–1840), whose theocratic views have much in common with those of Maistre, and of his teacher Saint-Martin, dwelt on the necessity of language as a condition of thought, and maintained that language is of divine origin. Ballanche (1776–1847), half poet, half philosopher, connected theocratic ideas with a theory of human progress — a social and political palingenesis—which had in it the elements of political liberalism. Theocracy and liberalism met in the genius of FÉLICITÉ-ROBERT DE LAMENNAIS (1782–1854); they engaged after a time in conflict, and in the end the victory lay with his democratic sympathies. A Breton and a priest, Lamennais, endowed with imagination, passion, and eloquence, was more a prophet than a priest. He saw the world around him perishing through lack of faith; religion alone could give it life and health; a Church, freed from political shackles, in harmony with popular tendencies, governed by the sovereign Pontiff, might animate the world anew. The voice of the Catholic Church is the voice of humanity, uttering the general reason of mankind. When the *Essai sur l'Indifférence en Matière de Religion* appeared, another Bossuet seemed to have arisen. But was a democratic Catholicism possible? Lamennais trusted that it might be so, and as the motto of the journal *L'Avenir* (1830), in which Lacordaire and Montalembert were his fellow-labourers, he chose the words *Dieu et Liberté*.

The orthodoxy of the *Avenir* was suspected. Lamennais, with his friends, journeyed to Rome "to consult the Lord in Shiloh," and in the *Affaires de Rome* recorded his experiences. The Encyclical of 1832 pronounced against the doctrines dearest to his heart and conscience;

he bowed in submission, yet he could not abandon his inmost convictions. His hopes for a democratic theocracy failing, he still trusted in the peoples. But the democracy of his desire and faith was one not devoted to material interests; to spiritualise the democracy became henceforth his aim. In the *Paroles d'un Croyant* he announced in rhythmical prose his apocalyptic visions. "It is," said a contemporary, "a *bonnet rouge* planted on a cross." In his elder years Lamennais believed in a spiritual power, a common thought, a common will directing society, as the soul directs the body, but, like the soul, invisible. His metaphysics, in which it is attempted to give a scientific interpretation and application to the doctrine of the Trinity, are set forth in the *Esquisse d'une Philosophie*. His former associates, Lacordaire, the eloquent Dominican, and Montalembert, the historian, learned and romantic, of Western monasticism, remained faithful children of the Church. Lamennais, no less devout in spirit than they, died insubmissive, and above his grave, among the poor of Père-Lachaise, no cross was erected.

The antagonism to eighteenth-century thought assumed other forms than those of the theocratic school. VICTOR COUSIN (1792–1867), a pupil of Maine de Biran and Royer-Collard, became at the age of twenty-three a lecturer on philosophy at the Sorbonne. He was enthusiastic, ambitious, eloquent; with scanty knowledge he spoke as one having authority, and impressed his hearers with the force of a ruling personality. Led on from Scotch to German philosophy, and having the advantage of personal acquaintance with Hegel, he advanced through psychology to metaphysics. Not in the senses but in the reason, impersonal in its spontaneous activity,

he recognised the source of absolute truth; in the first act of consciousness are disclosed the finite, the infinite, and their mutual relations. In the history of philosophy, in its four great systems of sensationalism, idealism, scepticism, mysticism, he recognised the substance of philosophy itself undergoing the process of evolution; each system is true in what it affirms, false in what it denies. With psychology as a starting-point, and eclecticism as a method, Cousin attempted to establish a spiritualist doctrine. A young leader in the domain of thought, he became at a later time too imperious a ruler. In the writings of his disciple and friend THÉODORE JOUFFROY (1796–1842) there is a deeper accent of reality. Doubting, and contending with his doubts, Jouffroy brooded upon the destiny of man, made inquisition into the problems of psychology, refusing to identify mental science with physiology, and applied his remarkable powers of patient and searching thought to the solution of questions in morals and æsthetics. The school of Cousin has been named eclectic; it should rather be named spiritualist. The tendencies to which it owed its origin extended beyond philosophy, and are apparent in the literary art of Cousin's contemporaries.

As a basis for social reconstruction the spiritualist philosophy was ineffectual. Another school of thought issuing from the Revolution, yet opposing its anarchic individualism, aspired to regenerate society by the application of the principles of positive science. CLAUDE-HENRI DE SAINT-SIMON (1760–1825), and FRANÇOIS-CHARLES FOURIER (1772–1837), differing in many of their opinions, have a common distinction as the founders of modern socialism. Saint-Simon's ideal was that of a State controlled in things of the mind by men of science, and in

material affairs by the captains of industry. The aim of society should be the exploitation of the globe by associative effort. In his *Nouveau Christianisme* he thought to deliver the Christian religion from the outworn superstition, as he regarded it, alike of Catholicism and Protestantism, and to point out its true principle as adapted to our nineteenth century—that of human charity, the united effort of men towards the well-being of the poorest class.

Saint-Simon, fantastic, incoherent, deficient in the scientific spirit and in the power of co-ordinating his results, yet struck out suggestive ideas. A great and systematic thinker, AUGUSTE COMTE (1798–1857), who was associated with Saint-Simon from 1817 to 1824, perceived the significance of these ideas, and was urged forward by them to researches properly his own. The positivism of Comte consists of a philosophy and a polity, in which a religion is involved. The quickening of his emotional nature through an adoring friendship with Mme. Clotilde de Vaux, made him sensible of the incompleteness of his earlier efforts at an intellectual reconstruction ; he felt the need of worship and of love. Comte's philosophy proceeds from the theory that all human conceptions advance from the primitive theological state, through the metaphysical—when abstract forces, occult causes, scholastic entities are invented to explain the phenomena of nature—to the positive, when at length it is recognised that human knowledge cannot pass beyond the region of phenomena. With these stages corresponds the progress of society from militarism, aggressive or defensive, to industrialism. The several abstract sciences —those dealing with the laws of phenomena rather than with the application of laws—are so arranged by Comte

as to exhibit each more complex science resting on a simpler, to which it adds a new order of truths; the whole erection, ascending to the science of sociology, which includes a dynamical as well as a statical doctrine of human society—a doctrine of the laws of progress as well as of the laws of order—is crowned by morals.

In the polity of positivism the supreme spiritual power is entrusted to a priesthood of science. Their moral influence will be chiefly directed to reinforcing the social feeling, altruism, as against the predominance of self-love. The object of religious reverence is not God, but the "Great Being"—Humanity, the society of the noble living and the noble dead, the company, or rather the unity, of all those who contribute to the better life of man. To Humanity we pay our vows, we yield our gratitude, we render our homage, we direct our aspirations; for Humanity we act and live in the blessed subordination of egoistic desire. Women—the mother, the wife, the daughter—purifying through affection the energies of man, act, under the Great Being, as angelic guardians, accomplishing a moral providence.

Comte's theory of the three states, theological, metaphysical, and positive, was accepted by PIERRE JOSEPH PROUDHON (1809–65), a far more brilliant writer, a far less constructive thinker, and aided him in arriving at conclusions which differ widely from those of Comte. Son of a cooper at Besançon, Proudhon had the virtues of a true child of the people—integrity, affection, courage, zeal, untiring energy. Religion he would replace by morality, ardent, strict, and pure. Free associations of workmen, subject to no spiritual or temporal authority, should arise over all the land. *Qu'est-ce que la Propriété?* he asked in the title of a work published in 1840; and

his answer was, *La Propriété c'est le Vol.* Property, seizing upon the products of labour in the form of rent or interest, and rendering no equivalent, is theft. Justice demands that service should be repaid by an equal service. Society, freely organising itself on the principles of liberty and justice, requires no government; only through such anarchy as this can true order be attained. An apostle of modern communism, Proudhon, by ideas leavening the popular mind, became no insignificant influence in practical politics.

CHAPTER III

POETRY OF THE ROMANTIC SCHOOL

I

THE eighteenth century did homage to the reason; it sought for general truths, scientific, social, political; its art was in the main an inheritance, diminished with lapse of time, from the classical art of the preceding century. With Rousseau came an outburst of the personal element in literature, an overflow of sensibility, an enfranchisement of the passions, and of imagination as connected with the passions; his eloquence has in it the lyrical note. The romantic movement was an assertion of freedom for the imagination, and an assertion of the rights of individuality. Love, wonder, hope, measureless desire, strange fears, infinite sadness, the sentiment of nature, aspiration towards God, were born anew. Imagination, claiming authority, refused to submit to the rules of classic art. Why should the several literary species be impounded each in its separate paddock? Let them mingle at the pleasure of the artist's genius; let the epic and the drama catch what they can of the lyric cry; let tragedy and comedy meet and mix. Why remain in servitude to the models of Greece and Rome? Let all epochs and every clime contribute to the enrichment of art. The primitive age was above all others the

age of poetry. The great Christian centuries were the centuries of miracle and marvel, of spiritual exaltation and transcendent passion. Honour, therefore, to our mediæval forefathers! It is the part of reason to trust the imagination in the imaginative sphere. Through what is most personal and intimate we reach the truths of the universal heart of man. An image may at the same time be a symbol; behind a historical tableau may lie a philosophical idea.

At first the romantic movement was Christian and monarchical. Its assertion of freedom, its claims on behalf of the *ego*, its licence of the imagination, were in reality revolutionary. The intellect is more aristocratic than the passions. The great spectacle of modern democracy deploying its forces is more moving than any pallid ideals of the past; it has the grandeur and breadth of the large phenomena of nature; it is wide as a sunrise; its advance is as the onset of the sea, and has like rumours of victory and defeat. The romantic movement, with no infidelity to its central principle, became modern and democratic.

Foreign life and literatures lent their aid to the romantic movement in France—the passion and mystery of the East; the struggle for freedom in Greece; the old ballads of Spain; the mists, the solitudes, the young heroes, the pallid female forms of Ossian; the feudal splendours of Scott; the melancholy Harold; the mysterious Manfred; Goethe's champion of freedom, his victim of sensibility, his seeker for the fountains of living knowledge; Schiller's revolters against social law, and his adventurers of the court and camp.

With the renewal of imagination and sentiment came a renewal of language and of metre. The poetical

diction of the eighteenth century had grown colourless and abstract; general terms had been preferred to particular; simple, direct, and vivid words had been replaced by periphrases—the cock was "the domestic bird that announces the day." The romantic poets sought for words—whether noble or vulgar—that were coloured, concrete, picturesque. The tendency culminated with Gautier, to whom words were valuable, like gems, for their gleam, their iridescence, and their hardness. Lost treasures of the language were recovered; at a later date new verbal inventions were made. By degrees, also, grammatical structure lost some of its rigidity; sentences and periods grew rather than were built; phrases were alive, and learnt, if there were a need, to leap and bound. Verse was moulded by the feeling that inspired it; the melodies were like those of an Eolian harp, long-drawn or retracted as the wind swept or touched the strings. Symmetry was slighted; harmony was valued for its own sake and for its spiritual significance. Rich rhymes satisfied or surprised the ear, and the poet sometimes suffered through his curiosity as a virtuoso. By internal licences—the mobile cesura, new variations and combinations—the power of the alexandrine was marvellously enlarged; it lost its monotony and became capable of every achievement; its external restraints were lightened; verse glided into verse as wave overtaking wave. The accomplishment of these changes was a gradual process, of which Hugo and Sainte-Beuve were the chief initiators. Gautier and, in his elder years, Hugo contributed to the later evolution of romantic verse. The influence on poetical form of Lamartine, Vigny, Musset, was of minor importance.

The year 1822 is memorable; it saw the appearance

of Vigny's *Poèmes*, the *Odes* of Hugo, which announced a new power in literature, though the direction of that power was not yet defined, and almost to the same moment belongs the indictment of classical literature by Henri Beyle ("Stendhal") in his study entitled *Racine et Shakespeare*. Around Charles Nodier, in the library of the Arsenal, gathered the young revolters—among them Vigny, Sainte-Beuve, Émile Deschamps, afterwards the translator of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Macbeth*, his brother Antony, afterwards the translator of the *Divine Comedy*. The first Cénacle was formed; in the *Muse Française* and in the *Globe* the principles of the new literary school were expounded and illustrated. Victor Hugo looked on with friendly intentions, but still held aloof.

Jean-Pierre de Béranger (1780–1857) was not one of this company of poets. A child of Paris, of humble parentage, he discovered, after various experiments, that his part was not that of a singer of large ambitions. In 1815 his first collection of *Chansons* appeared; the fourth appeared in 1833. Standing between the bourgeoisie and the people, he mediated between the popular and the middle-class sentiment. His songs flew like town sparrows from garret to garden; impudent or discreet, they nested everywhere. They seemed to be the embodied wisdom of good sense, good temper, easy morals, love without its ardours, poverty without its pains, patriotism without its fatigues, a religion on familiar terms with the *Dieu des bonnes gens*. In his elder years a Béranger legend had evolved itself; he was the sage of democracy, the Socrates of the people, the patriarch to whom pilgrims travelled to receive the oracles of liberal and benevolent philosophy. Notwithstanding his faults in

the pseudo-classic taste, Béranger was skilled in the art of popular song; he knew the virtue of concision; he knew how to evolve swiftly his little lyric drama; he knew how to wing his verses with a volant refrain; he could catch the sentiment of the moment and of the multitude; he could be gay with touches of tenderness, and smile through a tear reminiscent of departed youth and pleasure and Lisette. For the good bourgeois he was a liberal in politics and religion; for the people he was a democrat who hated the Restoration, loved equality more than liberty, and glorified the legendary Napoleon, representative of democratic absolutism. In the history of politics the songs of Béranger count for much; in the history of literature the poet has a little niche of his own, with which one may be content who, if he had not in elder years supposed himself the champion of a literary revolution, might be called modest.

II

Among the members of the Cénacle was to be seen a poet already famous, their elder by several years, who might have been the master of a school had he not preferred to dwell apart; one who, born for poetry, chose to look on verse as no more than an accident of his existence. In the year 1820 had appeared a slender volume entitled *Méditations Poétiques*. The soul, long departed, returned in this volume to French poetry. Its publication was an event hardly less important than that of the *Génie du Christianisme*. The well-springs of pure inspiration once more flowed. The critics, indeed, were not all enthusiastic; the public, with a surer instinct.

recognised in Lamartine the singer they had for many years desired, and despaired to find.

ALPHONSE DE LAMARTINE, born at Mâcon in 1790, of royalist parents, had passed his childhood among the tranquil fields and little hills around his homestead at Milly. From his mother he learned to love the Bible, Tasso, Bernardin, and a christianised version of the Savoyard Vicar's faith; at a later time he read Chateaubriand, Rousseau, Milton, Byron, and was enchanted by the wandering gleams and glooms of Ossian. From the melancholy of youth he was roused by Italian travel, and by that Italian love romance of Graziella, the circumstances of which he has dignified for the uses of idealised autobiography. A deeper passion of love and grief followed; Madame Charles, the "Julie" of Lamartine's *Raphaël*, the "Elvire" of his *Méditations*, died. Lamartine had versified already in a manner which has affinities with that of those eighteenth-century poets and elegiac singers of the Empire whom he was to banish from public regard. Love and grief evoked finer and purer strains; his deepest feelings flowed into verse with perfect sincerity and perfect spontaneity. Without an effort of the will he had become the most illustrious poet of France.

Lamartine had held and had resigned a soldier's post in the body-guard of Louis XVIII. He now accepted the position of attaché to the embassy at Naples; published in 1823 his *Nouvelles Méditations*, and two years later *Le Dernier Chant du Pèlerinage d'Harold* (Byron's Childe Harold); after which followed a long silence. Secretary in 1824 to the legation at Florence, he abandoned after a time the diplomatic career, and on the eve of the Revolution of July (1830) appeared again as a

poet in his *Harmonies Poétiques et Religieuses;* travelled in the East in company with his wife, and recorded his impressions in the *Voyage en Orient;* entered into political life, at first a solitary in politics as he had been in literature, but by degrees finding himself drawn more and more towards democratic ideas. "Where will you sit?" he was asked on his presentation in the Chamber. His smiling reply, "On the ceiling," was symbolical of the fact; but from "the ceiling" his exalted oratory, generous in temper, sometimes wise and well informed, descended with influence. *Jocelyn* (1836), *La Chute d'un Ange* (1838), the *Recueillements Poétiques* (1839), closed the series of his poetical works, though he did not wholly cease from song.

In 1847 Lamartine's idealising *Histoire des Girondins*, brilliant in its romantic portraiture, had the importance of a political event. The Revolution of February placed him for a little time at the head of affairs; as he had been the soul of French poetry, so for a brief hour he was the soul of the political life of France. With the victory of imperialism Lamartine retired into the shade. He was more than sixty years of age; he had lost his fortune and was burdened with debt. His elder years were occupied with incessant improvisations for the booksellers—histories, biographies, tales, criticism, autobiographic confidences flowed from his pen. It was a gallant struggle and a sad one. Through the delicate generosity of Napoleon III. he was at length relieved without humiliating concessions. In 1869 Lamartine died in his eightieth year.

He was a noble dreamer in practical affairs, and just ideas formed a portion of his dreams. Nature had made him an irreclaimable optimist; all that is base and ugly

in life passed out of view as he soared above earth in his luminous ether. Sadness and doubt indeed he knew, but his sadness had a charm of its own, and there were consolations in maternal nature, in love, in religious faith and adoration. His power of vision was not intense or keen; his descriptions are commonly vague or pale; but no one could mirror more faithfully a state of feeling divested of all material circumstance. The pure and ample harmonies of his verse do not attack the ear, but they penetrate to the soul. All the great lyric themes—God, nature, death, glory, melancholy, solitude, regret, desire, hope, love—he interpreted on his instrument with a musician's inspiration. Unhappily he lacked the steadfast force of will, the inexhaustible patience, which go to make a complete artist; he improvised admirably; he refused to labour as a master of technique; hence his diffuseness, his negligences; hence the decline of his powers after the first spontaneous inspiration was exhausted.

Lamartine may have equalled but he never surpassed the best poems of his earliest volume. But the elegiac singer aspired to be a philosophic poet, and, infusing his ideas into sentiment and narrative, became the author of *Jocelyn* and *La Chute d'un Ange*. Recalling and idealising an episode in the life of his friend the Abbé Dumont, he tells how Jocelyn, a child of humble parents—not yet a priest—takes shelter among the mountains from the Revolutionary terror; how a proscribed youth, Laurence, becomes his companion; how Laurence is found to be a girl; how friendship passes into love; how, in order that he may receive the condemned bishop's last confession, Jocelyn submits to become a priest; how the lovers part; how Laurence wander

into piteous ways of passion; how Jocelyn attends her in her dying hours, and lays her body among the hills and streams of their early love. It is Jocelyn who chronicles events and feelings in his journal of joy and of sorrow. Lamartine acknowledges that he had before him as a model the idyl dear to him in childhood—Bernardin's *Paul et Virginie.*

The poem is complete in itself, but it was designed as a fragment of that vast modern epopee, with humanity for the hero, of which *La Chute d'un Ange* was another fragment. The later poem, vast in dimensions, fantastic in subject, negligent in style, is a work of Lamartine's poetic decline. We are among the mountains of Lebanon, where dwell the descendants of Cain. The angel, enamoured of the maiden Daïdha, becomes human. Through gigantic and incoherent inventions looms the idea of humanity which degrades itself by subjugation to the senses, as in *Jocelyn* we had seen the type of humanity which ascends by virtue of aspirations of the soul. It was a poor jest to say that the title of his poem *La Chute d'un Ange* described its author. Lamartine had failed; he could not handle so vast a subject with plastic power; but in earlier years he had accomplished enough to justify us in disregarding a late failure—he had brought back the soul to poetry.

III

Among the romantic poets who made themselves known between 1820 and 1830, ALFRED DE VIGNY is distinguished by the special character of his genius, and by the fact that nothing in nis poetry is derived

from his contemporaries. Lamartine, Hugo, and, at a later date, Musset, found models or suggestions in his writings. He, though for a time closely connected with the romantic school, really stands apart and alone. Born in 1797, he followed the profession of his father, that of arms, and knew the hopes, the illusions, and the disappointments of military service at the time of the fall of the Empire and the Bourbon restoration. He read eagerly in Greek literature, in the Old Testament, and among eighteenth-century philosophers. As early as 1815 he wrote his admirable poem *La Dryade*, in which, before André Chénier's verse had appeared, Chénier's fresh and delicate feeling for antiquity was anticipated. In 1822 his first volume, *Poèmes*, was published, including the *Héléna*, afterwards suppressed, and groups of pieces classified as *Antiques*, *Judaïques*, and *Modernes*. Already his *Moïse*, majestic in its sobriety, was written, though it waited four years for publication in the volume of *Poèmes Antiques et Modernes* (1826). Moses climbing the slopes of Nebo personifies the solitude and the heavy burden of genius; his one aspiration now is for the sleep of death; and it is the lesser leader Joshua who will conduct the people into the promised land. The same volume included *Eloa*, a romance of love which abandons joy through an impulse of divine pity: the radiant spirit Eloa, born from a tear of Christ, resigns the happiness of heaven to bring consolation to the great lost angel suffering under the malediction of God. Other pieces were inspired by Spain, with its southern violence of passion, and by the pass of Roncesvalles, with its chivalric associations.

The novel of *Cinq-Mars*, which had a great success, is a free treatment of history; but Vigny's best work is

rather the embodiment of ideas than the rendering of historical matter. His *Stello* in its conception has something of kinship with *Moïse;* in three prose tales relating the sufferings of Chatterton, Chénier, and Gilbert, it illustrates the sorrows of the possessors of genius. Vigny's military experience suggested another group of tales, the *Servitude et Grandeur Militaires;* the soldier in accepting servitude finds his consolation in the duty at all costs of strenuous obedience.

In 1827 Vigny quitted the army, and next year took place his marriage—one not unhappy, but of imperfect sympathy—to an English lady, Lydia Bunbury. His interest in English literature was shown by translations of *Othello* and the *Merchant of Venice.* The former was acted with the applause of the young romanticists, who worshipped Shakespeare ardently if not wisely, and who bore the shock of hearing the unclassical word *mouchoir* valiantly pronounced on the French stage. The triumph of his drama of *Chatterton* (1835) was overwhelming, though its glory to-day seems in excess of its deserts. Ten years later Vigny was admitted to the Academy. But with the representation of *Chatterton,* and at the moment of his highest fame, he suddenly ceased from creative activity. Never was his mind more energetic, never was his power as an artist so mature; but, except a few wonderful poems contributed to the *Revue des Deux Mondes,* and posthumously collected, nothing was given by him to the world from 1835 to 1863, the year of his death.

He had always been a secluded spirit; external companionship left him inwardly solitary; secret—so Sainte-Beuve puts it—in his "tower of ivory"; touching some mountain-summit for a moment—so Dumas describes

him—if he folded his wings, as a concession to humanity. A great disillusion of passion had befallen him; but, apart from this, he must have retreated into his own sphere of ideas and of images, which seemed to him to be almost wronged by an attempt at literary expression. He looked upon the world with a disenchanted eye; he despaired of the possibilities of life for himself and for all men; without declamation or display, he resigned himself to a silent and stoical acceptance of the lot of man; but out of this calm despair arose a passionate pity for his fellows, a pity even for things evil, such as his Eloa felt for the lost angel. *La Colère de Samson* gives majestic utterance to his despair of human love; his *Mont des Oliviers*, where Jesus seeks God in vain, and where Judas lurks near, expresses his religious despair. Nature, the benevolent mother, says Vigny, is no mother, but a tomb. Yet he would not clamour against the heavens or the earth; he would meet death silently when it comes, like the dying wolf of his poem (*La Mort du Loup*), suffering but voiceless. Wealth and versatility of imagination were not Vigny's gifts. His dominant ideas were few, but he lived in them; for them he found apt imagery or symbol; and in verse which has the dignity of reserve and of passion controlled to sobriety, he let them as it were involuntarily escape from the seclusion of his soul. He is the thinker among the poets of his time, and when splendours of colour and opulence of sound have passed away, the idea remains. In fragments from his papers, published in 1867, with the title *Journal d'un Poète*, the inner history of Vigny's spirit can be traced.

IV

To present VICTOR HUGO in a few pages is to carve a colossus on a cherry-stone. His work dominates half a century. In the years of exile he began a new and greater career. During the closing ten years his powers had waned, but still they were extraordinary. Even with death he did not retire; posthumous publications astonished and perhaps fatigued the world.

Victor-Marie Hugo was born at Besançon on February 26, 1802, son of a distinguished military officer—

"*Mon père vieux soldat, ma mère Vendéenne.*"

Mother and children followed Commandant Hugo to Italy in 1807; in Spain they halted at Ernani and at Torquemada — names remembered by the poet; at Madrid a Spanish Quasimodo, their school servant, alarmed the brothers Eugène and Victor. A schoolboy in Paris, Victor Hugo rhymed his chivalric epic, his tragedy, his melodrama—"les bétises que je faisais avant ma naissance." In 1816 he wrote in his manuscript book the words, "I wish to be Chateaubriand or nothing." At fifteen he was the laureate of the Jeux Floraux, the "enfant sublime" of Chateaubriand's or of Soumet's praise.

Founder, with his brothers, of the *Conservateur Littéraire*, he entered into the society of those young aspirants who hoped to renew the literature of France. In 1822 he published his *Odes et Poésies Diverses*, and, obtaining a pension from Louis XVIII., he married his early playfellow Adèle Foucher. Romances, lyrics, dramas followed in swift succession. Hugo, by virtue of his genius, his

domineering temper, his incessant activity, became the acknowledged leader of the romantic school. In 1841 he was a member of the Academy; four years later he was created a peer. Elected deputy of Paris in 1848, the year of revolution, he sat on the Right in the Constituant, on the Left in the Legislative Assembly, tending more and more towards socialistic democracy. The Empire drove him into exile—exile first at Brussels, then in Jersey, finally in Guernsey, where Hugo, in his own imagination, was the martyred but unsubdued demi-god on his sea-beaten rock. In 1870, on the fall of the Empire, he returned to Paris, witnessed the siege, was elected to the National Assembly, urged a continuance of the war, spoke in favour of recognising Garibaldi's election, and being tumultuously interrupted by the Right, sent in his resignation. Occupied at Brussels in the interests of his orphaned grandchildren, he was requested to leave, on the ground of his zeal on behalf of the fallen Communists; he returned to Paris, and pleaded in the *Rappel* for amnesty. In 1875 he was elected a senator. His eightieth birthday was celebrated with enthusiasm. Three years later, on May 23, 1885, Victor Hugo died. His funeral pomps were such that one might suppose the genius of France itself was about to be received at the Panthéon.

In Victor Hugo an enormous imagination and a vast force of will operated amid inferior faculties. His character was less eminent than his genius. If it is vanity to take a magnified Brocken-shadow for one's self and to admire its superb gestures upon the mist, never was vanity more complete or more completely satisfied than his. He was to himself the hero of a Hugo legend, and did not perceive when the sublime became the

ridiculous. Generous to those beneath him, charitable to universal humanity, he was capable of passionate vindictiveness against individuals who had wounded his self-esteem; and, since whatever opposed him was necessarily an embodiment of the power of evil, the contest rose into one of Ormuzd against Ahriman. His intellect, the lesser faculty, was absorbed by his imagination. Vacuous generalities, clothed in magnificent rhetoric, could pass with him for ideas; but his visions are sometimes thoughts in images. The voice of his passions was leonine, but his moral sensibility wanted delicacy. His laughter was rather boisterous than fine. He is a poet who seldom achieved a faultless rendering of the subtle psychology of lovers' hearts; there was in him a vein of robust sensuality. Children were dear to him, and he knew their pretty ways; a cynical critic might allege that he exploited overmuch the tender domesticities. His eye seized every form, vast or minute, defined or vague; his feeling for colour was rather strong than delicate; his vision was obsessed by the antithesis of light and shade; his ear was awake to every utterance of wind or wave; phantoms of sound attacked his imagination; he lent the vibrations of his nerves, his own sentiments, to material objects; he took and gave back the soul of things. Words for him were living powers; language was a moving mass of significant myths, from which he chose and which he aggrandised; sensations created images and words, and images and words created ideas. He was a master of all harmonies of verse; now a solitary breather through pipe or flute; more often the conductor of an orchestra.

To say that Hugo was the greatest lyric poet of France is to say too little; the claim that he was the greatest

lyric poet of all literature might be urged. The power and magnitude of his song result from the fact that in it what is personal and what is impersonal are fused in one; his soul echoed orchestrally the orchestrations of nature and of humanity—

> "*Son âme aux mille voix, que le Dieu qu'il adore*
> *Mit au centre de tout comme un écho sonore.*"

And thus if his poetry is not great by virtue of his own ideas, it becomes great as a reverberation of the sensations, the passions, and the thoughts of the world. He did not soar tranquilly aloft and alone; he was always a combatant in the world and wave of men, or borne joyously upon the flood. The evolution of his genius was a long process. The *Odes* of 1822 and 1824, the *Odes et Ballades* of 1826, Catholic and royalist in their feeling, show in their form a struggling originality oppressed by the literary methods of his predecessors—J.-B. Rousseau, Lebrun, Casimir Delavigne. This originality asserts itself chiefly in the *Ballades*. His early prose romances, *Han d'Islande* (1823) and *Bug-Jargal* (1826)—the one a tale of the seventeenth-century man-beast of Norway, the other a tale of the generous St. Domingo slave—are challenges of youthful and extravagant romanticism. *Le Dernier Jour d'un Condamné* (1829) is a prose study in the pathology of passion. The same year which saw the publication of the last of these is also the year of *Les Orientales*. These poems are also studies—amazing studies in colour, in form, in all the secrets of poetic art. The East was popular—Hugo was ever passionate for popularity—and Spain, which he had seen, is half-Oriental. But of what concern is the East? he had seen a sunset last summer, and the fancy took him; the

East becomes an occasion for marvellous combinations of harmony and lustrous tinctures; art for its own sake is precious.

From 1827, when *Cromwell* appeared, to 1843, when the epic in drama *Les Burgraves* failed, Hugo was a writer for the stage, diverting tragedy from its true direction towards lyrical melodrama.[1] In the operatic libretto *La Esmeralda* (1836) his lyrical virtuosity was free to display itself in an appropriate dramatic form. The libretto was founded on his own romance *Notre-Dame de Paris* (1831), an evocation, more imaginative than historical, of the old city of the fifteenth century, its tragic passions, its strangeness, its horrors, and its beauty; it is a marvellous series of fantasies in black and white; things live in it more truly than persons; the cathedral, by its tyrannous power and intenser life, seems to overshadow the other actors. The tale is a juxtaposition of violent contrasts, an antithesis of darkness and light. Through Quasimodo afflicted humanity appeals for pity.

In the volume of verse which followed *Les Orientales* after an interval of two years, *Les Feuilles d'Automne* (1831), Hugo is a master of his instrument, and does not need to display his miracles of skill; he is freer from faults than in the poetry of later years, but not therefore more to be admired. His noblest triumphs were almost inevitably accompanied by the excesses of his audacity. Here the lyrism is that of memory and of the heart—intimate, tender, grave, with a feeling for the hearth and home, a sensibility to the tranquillising influences of nature, a charity for human-kind, a faith in God, a hope of immortality. Now and again, as in

[1] See pp. 391–393.

the epilogue, the spirit of public indignation breaks forth—

"*Et j'ajoute à ma lyre une corde d'airain.*"

The spirit of the *Chants du Créspuscule* (1835) is one of doubt, trouble, almost of gloom. Hugo's faith in the bourgeois monarchy is already waning; he is a satirist of the present; he sees two things that are majestic—the figure of Napoleon in the past, the popular flood-tide in the future which rises to threaten the thrones of kings. But this tide is discerned, as it were, through a dimness of weltering mist. *Les Voix Intérieures* (1837) resumes the tendencies of the two preceding volumes; the dead Charles X. is reverently saluted; the legendary Napoleon is magnified; the faith in the people grows clearer; the inner whispers of the soul are caught with heedful ear; the voice of the sea now enters into Hugo's poetry; Nature, in the symbolic *La Vache*, is the mother and the exuberant nurse of all living things. In *Les Rayons et les Ombres* (1840), Nature is not only the nurse, but the instructress and inspirer of the soul, mingling spirit with spirit. Lamartine's *Le Lac* and Musset's *Souvenir* find a companion, not more pure, but of fuller harmonies, in the *Tristesse d'Olympio;* reminiscences of childhood are magically preserved in the poem of the *Feuillantines.*

From 1840 to 1853 Hugo as a lyrical poet was silent. Like Lamartine, he had concerned himself with politics. A private grief oppressed his spirits. In 1843 his daughter Léopoldine and her husband of a few short months were drowned. In 1852 the poet who had done so much to magnify the first Napoleon in the popular imagination was the exile who launched his prose invective *Napoléon le Petit.* A year later appeared *Les Châtiments*, in which

satire, with some loss of critical discernment, is infused with a passionate lyrical quality, unsurpassed in literature, and is touched at times with epic grandeur. The Empire, if it severed Hugo from the soil of France, restored him to himself with all his superb power and all his violences and errors of genius.

The volumes of *Les Contemplations* (1856) mark the culmination of Hugo's powers as a lyrical poet. The earlier pieces are of the past, from 1830 to 1843, and resemble the poems of the past. A group of poems, sacred to the memory of his daughter, follow, in which beauty and pathos are interpenetrated by a consoling faith in humanity, in nature, and in God. The concluding pieces are in a greater manner. The visionary Hugo lives and moves amid a drama of darkness and of light; gloom is smitten by splendour, splendour collapses into gloom; and darkness and light seem to have become vocal in song.

But a further development lay before him. The great lyric poet was to carry all his lyric passion into an epic presentation, in detached scenes, of the life of humanity. The first part of *La Légende des Siècles* was published in 1859 (later series, 1877, 1883). From the birth of Eve to the trumpet of judgment the vast cycle of ages and events unrolls before us; gracious episodes relieve the gloom; beauty and sublimity go hand in hand; in the shadow the great criminals are pursued by the great avengers. The spirit of *Les Châtiments* is conveyed into a view of universal history; if kings are tyrants and priests are knaves, the people is a noble epic hero. This poem is the epopee of democratic passions.

The same spirit of democratic idealism inspires Hugo's romance *Les Misérables* (1862). The subject now is

modern; the book is rather the chaos of a prose epic than a novel; the hero is the high-souled outcast of society; everything presses into the pages; they are turn by turn historical, narrative, descriptive, philosophical (with such philosophy as Hugo has to offer), humanitarian, lyrical, dramatic, at times realistic; a vast invention, beautiful, incredible, sublime, absurd, absorbing in its interest, a nightmare in its tedium.

We have passed beyond the mid-century, but Hugo is not to be presented as a torso. In the tale *Les Travailleurs de la Mer* (1866) the choral voices of the sea cover the thinness and strain of the human voices; if the writer's genius is present in *L'Homme qui Rit* (1869), it often chooses to display its most preposterous attitudes; the better scenes of *Quatre-vingt Treize* (1874) beguile our judgment into the generous concessions necessary to secure an undisturbed delight. These are Hugo's later poems in prose. In verse he revived the feelings of youth with a difference, and performed happy caprices of style in the *Chansons des Rues et des Bois* (1865); sang the incidents and emotions of his country's sorrow and glory in *L'Année Terrible* (1872), and—strange contrast—the poetry of babyland in *L'Art d'être Grand-père* (1877). Volume still followed volume—*Le Pape*, *La Pitié Suprême*, *Religions et Religion*, *L'Âne*, *Les Quatre Vents de l'Esprit*, the drama *Torquemada*. The best pages in these volumes are perhaps equal to the best in any of their author's writings; the pages which force antithesis, pile up synonyms, develop commonplaces in endless variations, the pages which are hieratic, prophetic, apocalyptic, put a strain upon the loyalty of our admiration. The last legend of Hugo's imagination was the Hugo legend: if theism was his faith, autotheism was his

superstition. Yet it is easy to restore our loyalty, and to rediscover the greatest lyric poet, the greatest master of poetic counterpoint that France has known.

V

ALFRED DE MUSSET has been reproached with having isolated himself from the general interests and affairs of his time. He did not isolate himself from youth or love, and the young of two generations were his advocates. Born in 1810, son of the biographer of Rousseau, he was a Parisian, inheriting the sentiment and the scepticism of the eighteenth century. Impressionable, excitable, greedy of sensations, he felt around him the void left by the departed glories of the Empire, the void left by the passing away of religious faiths. One thing was new and living—poetry. Chénier's remains had appeared; Vigny, Hugo, Lamartine had opened the avenues for the imagination; Byron was dead, but Harold and Manfred and Don Juan survived. Musset, born a poet, was ready for imaginative ventures; he had been introduced, while still a boy, to the Cénacle. Spain and Italy were the regions of romance; at nineteen he published his first collection of poems, *Contes d'Espagne et d'Italie*, and—an adolescent Chérubin-Don Juan of song—found himself famous.

He gave his adhesion to the romantic school, rather with the light effrontery of youth than with depth of conviction; he was impertinent, ironical, incredulous, blasphemous, despairing, as became an elegant Byron minor of the boulevards, aged nineteen. But some of the pieces were well composed; all had the "form and

feature of blown youth"; the echoes of southern lands had the fidelity and strangeness of echoes tossed from Paris backwards; certain passages and lines had a classic grace; it might even be questioned whether the *Ballade à la Lune* was a challenge to the school of tradition, or a jest at the expense of his own associates.

A season of hesitation and of transition followed. Musset was not disposed to play the part of the small drummer-boy inciting the romantic battalion to the double-quick. He began to be aware of his own independence. He was romantic, but he had wit and a certain intellectual good-sense; he honoured Racine together with Hugo; he could not merge his individuality in a school. Yet, with an infirmity characteristic of him, Musset was discourarged. It was not in him to write great poetry of an impersonal kind; his *Nuit Vénitienne* had been hissed at the Odéon; and what had he to sing out of his own heart? He resolved to make the experiment. Three years after his first volume a second appeared, which announced by its title that, while still a dramatic poet, he had abandoned the stage; the *Spectacle dans un Fauteuil* declared that, though his glass was small, it was from his own glass that he would drink.

The glass contained the wine of love and youth mingled with a grosser potion. In the drama *La Coupe et les Lèvres* he exhibited libertine passion seeking alliance with innocence and purity, and incapable of attaining self-recovery; in *Namouna*, hastily written to fit the volume for publication, he presented the pursuit of ideal love as conducting its victim through all the lures of sensual desire; the comedy *À quoi rêvent les jeunes Filles*, with its charm of fantasy, tells of a father's

device to prepare his daughters for the good prose of wedlock by the poetry of invented romance. Musset had emancipated himself from the Cénacle, and would neither appeal to the eye with an overcharge of local colour, nor seduce the ear with rich or curious rhymes. Next year (1833) in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* appeared *Rolla*, the poem which marks the culmination of Musset's early manner, and of Byron's influence on his genius; the prodigal, beggared of faith, debased by self-indulgence, is not quite a disbeliever in love; through passion he hastens forward in desperation to the refuge of death.

At the close of 1833 Musset was with George Sand in Italy. The hours of illusion were followed by months of despair. He knew suffering, not through the imagination, but in his own experience. After a time calm gradually returned, and the poet, great at length by virtue of the sincerity of genius, awoke. He is no longer frivolously despairing and elegantly corrupt. In *Les Nuits*—two of these (*Mai*, *Octobre*) inspired by the Italian joy and pain—he speaks simply and directly from the heart in accents of penetrating power. Solitude, his constant friend, the Muse, and love rising from the grave of love, shall be his consolers—

> "*Après avoir souffert, il faut souffrir encore;*
> *Il faut aimer sans cesse, après avoir aimé.*"

Musset's powers had matured through suffering; the *Lettre à Lamartine*, the *Espoir en Dieu*, the *Souvenir*, the elegy *À la Malibran*, the later stanzas *Après une Lecture* (1842), are masterpieces of the true Musset—the Musset who will live.

At thirty Musset was old. At rare intervals came

the flash and outbreak of a fiery mind; but the years were years of lassitude. His patriotic song, *Le Rhin Allemand*, is of 1841. In 1852 the Academy received him. "Musset s'absente trop," observed an Academician; the ungracious reply, "Il s'absinthe trop," told the truth, and it was a piteous decline. In 1857, attended by the pious Sister Marceline, Musset died.

Passion, the spirit of youth, sensibility, a love of beauty, intelligence, *esprit*, fantasy, eloquence, graceful converse—these were Musset's gifts. He lacked ideas; he lacked the constructive imagination; with great capacities as a writer, he had too little of an artist's passion for perfection. His longest narrative in prose, the *Confession d'un Enfant du Siècle*, has borne the lapse of time ill. "J'y ai vomi la vérité," he said. It is not the happiest way of communicating truth, and the moral of the book that debauchery ends in cynicism, was not left for Musset to discover. Some of his shorter tales have the charm of fancy or the charm of tenderness, with breathing of nature here, and there the musky fragrance of a Louis Quinze boudoir. *Pierre et Camille*, with its deaf-and-dumb lovers, and their baby, who babbles in the presence of the relenting grandfather "Bonjour, papa," has a pretty innocence. *Le Fils de Titien* returns to the theme of fallen art, the ruin of self-indulgence. *Frédéric et Bernerette* and *Mimi Pinson* may be said to have created the poetic literature of the grisette—gay and good, erring and despairful—making a flower of what had blossomed in the stories of Paul de Kock as a weed.

Next to the most admirable of his lyric and elegiac poems, Musset's best *Comédies* and *Proverbes* (proverbial sayings exemplified in dramatic action), deserve a place. Written in prose for readers of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*

their scenic qualities were discovered only in 1847, when the actress Madame Allan presented *Un Caprice* and *Il faut qu'une Porte soit ouverte ou fermée* at St. Petersburg. The ambitious Shakespearian drama of political conspiracy, *Lorenzaccio*, was an effort beyond the province and the powers of Musset. His *André del Sarto*, a tragic representation of the great painter betrayed by his wife and his favourite pupil, needed the relief of his happier fantasy. It is in such delicate creations of a world of romance, a world of sunshine and of perpetual spring, as *On ne badine pas avec l'Amour*, *Les Caprices de Marianne*, *Le Chandelier*, *Il ne faut jurer de rien*, that Musset showed how romantic art could become in a high sense classic by the balance of sensibility and intelligence, of fantasy and passion. The graces of the age of Madame de Pompadour ally themselves here with the freer graces of the Italian Renaissance. Something of the romance of Shakespeare's more poetic comedies mingles with the artificial elegance of Marivaux. Their subject is love, and still repeated love; sentiment is relieved by the play of gaiety; the grotesque approaches the beautiful; we sail in these light-timbered barques to a land that lies not very far from the Illyria and Bohemia and Arden forest of our own great enchanter.

VI

Lyrical self-confession reached its limit in the poetry of Musset. Detachment from self and complete surrender to the object is the law of Gautier's most characteristic work; he is an eye that sees, a hand that moulds and colours—that is all. A child of the South,

born at Tarbes in 1811, THÉOPHILE GAUTIER was a pupil in the painter Rioult's studio till the day when, his friend the poet Gérard de Nerval having summoned him to take part in the battle of *Hernani*, he swore by the skull from which Byron drank that he would not be a defaulter. His first volume, *Poésies*, appeared in 1830 and was followed in two years by *Albertus*, a fantastic manufacture of strangeness and horror, amorous sorcery, love-philtres, witches' Sabbaths. The *Comédie de la Mort* evokes the illustrious shades of Raphael, Faust, Don Juan to testify to the vanity of knowledge and glory and art and love. Gautier's romantic enthusiasm was genuine and ardent. The *Orientales* was his poetic gospel; but the *Orientales* is precisely the volume in which Hugo is least effusive, and pursues art most exclusively for art's sake. Love and life and death in these early poems of Gautier are themes into which he works coloured and picturesque details; sentiment ideas are of value to him so far as they can be rendered in images wrought in high relief and tinctured with vivid pigments.

It was the sorrow of Gautier's life, that born, as he believed, for poetry, he was forced to toil day after day year after year, as a critic of the stage and of the art exhibitions. He performed his task in workman-like fashion, seeking rather to communicate impressions than to pronounce judgments. His most valuable pieces of literary criticism are his exhumations of the earlier seventeenth-century poets—Théophile, Cyrano, Saint Amant, Scarron, and others—published in 1844, together with a study of Villon, under the title *Les Grotesques*, and the memoir of 1867, drawn up in compliance with the request of the Minister of Public Instruction, on *La*

Progrès de la Poésie Française depuis 1830. A reader of that memoir to-day will feel, with Swift, that literary reputations are dislimned and shifted as quickly and softly as the forms of clouds when the wind plays aloft.

In 1840 Gautier visited Spain; afterwards he saw Italy, Algeria, Constantinople, Russia, Greece. He travelled not as a student of life or as a romantic sentimentalist. He saw exactly, and saw all things in colour; the world was for him so much booty for the eye. Endowed with a marvellous memory, an unwearied searcher of the vocabulary, he could transfer the visual impression, without a faltering outline or a hue grown dim, into words as exact and vivid as the objects which he beheld. If his imagination recomposed things, it was in the manner of some admired painter; he looked on nature through the medium of a Zurbaran or a Watteau. The dictionary for Gautier was a collection of gems that flashed or glowed; he chose and set them with the skill and precision of a goldsmith enamoured of his art. At Athens, in one of his latest wanderings, he stood in presence of the Parthenon, and found that he was a Greek who had strayed into the Middle Ages; on the faith of *Notre-Dame de Paris* he had loved the old cathedrals; "the Parthenon," he writes, "has cured me of the Gothic malady, which with me was never very severe."

Gautier's tales attained one of their purposes, that of astonishing the bourgeois; yet if he condescended to ideas, his ideas on all subjects except art had less value than those of the philistine. *Mademoiselle de Maupin* has lost any pretensions it possessed to supereminent immorality; its sensuality is that of a dream of youth; such purity as it possesses, compared with books of acrid

grossness, lies in the fact that the young author loved life and cared for beauty. In shorter tales he studiously constructs strangeness—the sense of mystery he did not in truth possess—on a basis of exactly carved and exactly placed material. His best invention is the tale of actors strolling in the time most dear to his imagination, the old days of Louis XIII., *Le Capitaine Fracasse*, suggested doubtless by Scarron's *Roman Comique*, and patiently retouched during a quarter of a century.

Gautier as a poet found his true self in the little pieces of the *Émaux et Camées*. He is not without sensibility, but he will not embarrass himself with either feelings or ideas. He has emancipated himself from the egoism of the romantic tendency. He sees as a painter or a gem-engraver sees, and will transpose his perceptions into coloured and carven words. That is all, but that is much. He values words as sounds, and can combine them harmoniously in his little stanzas. Life goes on around him; he is indifferent to it, caring only to fix the colour of his enamel, to cut his cameo with unfaltering hand. When the Prussian assault was intended to the city, when Regnault gave away his life as a soldier, Gautier in the Muses' bower sat pondering his epithets and filing his phrases. Was it strength, or was it weakness? His work survives and will survive by virtue of its beauty—beauty somewhat hard and material, but such as the artist sought. In 1872 Gautier died. By directing art to what is impersonal he prepared the way for the Parnassien school, and may even be recognised as one of the lineal predecessors of naturalism.

These—Lamartine, Vigny, Hugo, Musset, Gautier—are the names which represent the poetry of nineteenth-century romance; four stars of varying magnitudes, and one

enormous cometary apparition. There was also a *via lactea*, from which a well-directed glass can easily disentangle certain orbs, pallid or fiery: Sainte-Beuve, a critic and analyst of moral disease and disenchantment in the *Vie, Poésies et Pensées de Joseph Delorme;* a singer of spiritual reverie, modest pleasures, modest griefs, and tender memories in the *Consolations* and the *Pensées d'Août;* a virtuoso always in his metrical researches; Auguste Barbier, eloquent in his indignant satires the *Iambes*, lover of Italian art and nature in *Il Pianto;* Auguste Brizeux, the idyllist, in his *Marie*, of Breton wilds and provincial works and ways; Gérard de Nerval, Hégésippe Moreau, Madame Désbordes-Valmore, and paler, lessening lights. These and others dwindle for the eye into a general stream of luminous atoms.

VII

The weaker side of the romantic school is apparent in the theatre. It put forth a magnificent programme of dramatic reform, which it was unable to carry out. The preface to Victor Hugo's *Cromwell* (1827) is the earliest and the most important of its manifestoes. The poetry of the world's childhood, we are told, was lyrical; that of its youth was epic; the poetry of its maturity is dramatic. The drama aims at truth before all else; it seeks to represent complete manhood, beautiful and revolting, sublime and grotesque. Whatever is found in nature should be found in art; from multiple elements an æsthetic whole is to be formed by the sovereignty of imagination; unity of time, unity of place are worthless conventions; unity of action remains, and

must be maintained. The play meant to exemplify the principles of Hugo's preface is of vast dimensions, incapable of presentation on the stage; the large painting of life for which he pleaded, and which he did not attain, is of a kind more suitable to the novel than to the drama. *Cromwell*, which departs little from the old rules respecting time and place, is a flux and reflux of action, or of speeches in place of action, with the question of the hero's ambition for kingship as a centre; its personages are lay figures draped in the costumes of historical romance.

The genius of Hugo was pre-eminently lyrical; the movement to which he belonged was also essentially lyrical, a movement for the emancipation of the personal element in art; it is by qualities which are non-dramatic that his dramas are redeemed from dishonour. When, in 1830, his *Hernani* was presented at the Théâtre Français, a strange, long-haired, bearded, fantastically-attired brigade of young supporters engaged in a mêlée with those spectators who represented the tyranny of tradition. "Kill him! he is an Academician," was heard above the tumult. Gautier's truculent waistcoat flamed in the thickest of the fight. The enthusiasm of Gautier's party was justified by splendours of lyrism and of oratory; but Hugo's play is ill-constructed, and the characters are beings of a fantastic world. In *Marion Delorme*, in *Le Roi s'amuse*, in the prose-tragedy *Lucrèce Borgia*, Victor Hugo develops a favourite theme by a favourite method—the moral antithesis of some purity of passion surviving amid a life of corruption, the apotheosis of virtue discovered in a soul abandoned to vice, and exhibited in violent contrasts. Marion is ennobled by the sacrifice of whatever remains to her of honour; the moral de-

formity of Lucrèce is purified by her instinct of maternal love; the hideous Triboulet is beautiful by virtue of his devotion as a father. The dramatic study of character is too often replaced by sentimental rhetoric. *Ruy Blas*, like *Marion Delorme* and *Hernani*, has extraordinary beauties; yet the whole, with its tears and laughter, its lackey turned minister of state, its amorous queen, is an incredible phantasmagoria. *Angelo* is pure melodrama; *Marie Tudor* is the melodrama of history. *Les Burgraves* rises from declamation to poetry, or sinks from poetry to declamation; it is grandiose, epic, or, if the reader please, symbolic; it is much that it ought not to be, much that is admirable and out of place; failing in dramatic truth, it fails with a certain sublimity. The logic of action, truth of characterisation, these in tragic creation are essentials; no heights or depths of poetry which is non-dramatic can entirely justify works which do not accept the conditions proper to their kind.

The tragedy of *Torquemada*, strange in conception, wonderful — and wonderfully unequal — in imaginative power, was an inspiration of Hugo's period of exile, wrought into form in his latest years. The dramas of the earlier period, opening with an historical play too enormous for the stage, closed in 1843 with *Les Burgraves*, which is an epic in dialogue. Aspiring to revolutionary freedom, the romantic drama disdained the bounds of art; epic, lyric, tragedy, comedy met and mingled, with a result too often chaotic. The desired harmony of contraries was not attained. Past ages were to be revived upon the stage. The historic evocation possessed too often neither historic nor human truth; it consisted in "local colour," and local colour meant a picturesque display of theatrical bric-à-brac.

Yet a drama requires some centre of unity. Failing of unity in coherent action and well-studied character, can a centre be provided by some philosophical or pseudo-philosophical idea? Victor Hugo, wealthy in imagery, was not wealthy in original ideas; in grandiose prefaces he attempted to exhibit his art as the embodiment of certain abstract conceptions. A great poet is not necessarily a philosophical poet. Hugo's interpretations of his own art are only evidence of the fact that a writer's vanity can practise on his credulity.

Among the romantic poets the thinker was Vigny. But it is not by its philosophical symbolism that his *Chatterton* lives; it is by virtue of its comparative strength of construction, by what is sincere in its passion, what is genuine in its pathos, and by the character of its heroine, Kitty Bell. In the instincts of a dramaturgist both Vigny and Hugo fell far short of ALEXANDRE DUMAS (1803–70). Before the battle of *Hernani* he had unfolded the romantic banner in his *Henri III. et sa Cour* (1829); it dazzled by its theatrical inventions, its striking situations, its ever-changing display of the stage properties of historical romance. His *Antony*, of two years later, parent of a numerous progeny, is a domestic tragedy of modern life, exhaling Byronic passion, misanthropy, crime, with a bastard, a seducer, a murderer for its hero, and for its ornaments all those atrocities which fascinate a crowd whose nerves can bear to be agreeably shattered. Something of abounding vitality, of tingling energy, of impetuosity, of effrontery, secured a career for *Antony*, the *Tour de Nesle*, and his other plays. The trade in horrors lost its gallant freebooting airs and grew industriously commercial in the hands of Frédéric Soulié. When in 1843—the year of Hugo's unsuccessful *Les Burgraves*—

a pseudo-classical tragedy, the *Lucrèce* of Ponsard, was presented on the stage, the enthusiasm was great; youth and romance, if they had not vanished, were less militant than in the days of *Hernani;* it seemed as if good sense had returned to the theatre.[1]

Casimir Delavigne (1793–1843) is remembered in lyric poetry by his patriotic odes, *Les Messéniennes*, suggested by the military disasters of France. His dramatic work is noteworthy, less for the writer's talent than as indicating the influence of the romantic movement in checking the development of classical art. Had he been free to follow his natural tendencies, Delavigne would have remained a creditable disciple of Racine; he yielded to the stream, and timidly approached the romantic leaders in historical tragedy. Once in comedy he achieved success; *L'École des Vieillards* has the originality of presenting an old husband who is generous in heart, and a young wife who is good-natured amid her frivolity. Comedy during the second quarter of the century had a busy ephemeral life. The name of Eugène Scribe, an incessant improvisator during forty years, from 1811 onwards, in comedy, vaudeville, and lyric drama, seems to recall that of the seventeenth-century Hardy. His art was not all commerce; he knew and he loved the stage; a philistine writing for philistines, Scribe cared little for truth of character, for beauty of form; the theatrical devices became for him ends in themselves; of these he was as ingenious a master as is the juggler in another art when he tosses his bewildering balls, or smiles at the triumph of his inexplicable surprises.

[1] The influence of the great actress Rachel helped to restore to favour the classical theatre of Racine and Corneille.

CHAPTER IV

THE NOVEL

I

THE novel in the nineteenth century has yielded itself to every tendency of the age; it has endeavoured to revive the past, to paint the present, to embody a social or political doctrine, to express private and personal sentiment, to analyse the processes of the heart, to idealise life in the magic mirror of the imagination. The literature of prose fiction produced by writers who felt the influence of the romantic movement tended on the one hand towards lyrism, the passionate utterance of individual emotion—George Sand's early tales are conspicuous examples; on the other hand it turned to history, seeking to effect a living and coloured evocation of former ages. The most impressive of these evocations was assuredly Hugo's *Notre-Dame de Paris*. It was not the earliest; Vigny's *Cinq-Mars* preceded *Notre-Dame* by five years. The writer had laboriously mastered those details which help to make up the romantic *mise en scène;* but he sought less to interpret historical truth by the imagination than to employ the material of history as a vehicle for what he conceived to be ideal truth. In Mérimée's *Chronique de Charles IX.* (1829), which also preceded Hugo's romance, the histori-

cal, or, if not this, the archæological spirit is present; it skilfully sets a tale of the imagination in a framework of history.

Hugo's narratives are eminent by virtue of his imagination as a poet; they are lyrical, dramatic, epic; as a reconstitution of history their value is little or is none. The historical novel fell into the hands of Alexandre Dumas. No one can deny the brilliance, the animation, the bustle, the audacity, the inexhaustible invention of *Les Trois Mousquetaires* and its high-spirited fellows. There were times when no company was so inspiriting to us as that of the gallant Athos, Porthos, and Aramis. Let the critics assure us that Dumas' history is untrue, his characters superficial, his action incredible; we admit it, and we are caught again by the flash of life, the fanfaronade of adventure. We throw Eugène Sue to the critics that we may save Alexandre Dumas. But Dumas' brain worked faster than his hand—or any human hand—could obey its orders; the mine of his inventive faculty needed a commercial company and an army of diggers for its exploitation. He constituted himself the managing director of this company; twelve hundred volumes are said to have been the output of the chief and his subordinates; the work ceased to be literature, and became mere commerce. The money that Dumas accumulated he recklessly squandered. Half genius, half charlatan, his genius decayed, and his charlatanry grew to enormous proportions. Protected by his son, he died a poor man amid the disasters of the Franco-Prussian war.

II

Henri Beyle, who wrote under the pseudonym of Stendhal, not popular among his contemporaries, though winning the admiration of Mérimée and the praise of Balzac, predicted that he would be understood about 1880. If to be studied and admired is to be understood, the prediction has been fulfilled. Taine pronounced him the greatest psychologist of the century; M. Zola, doing violence to facts, claimed him as a literary ancestor; M. Bourget discovered in him the author of a nineteenth-century Bible and a founder of cosmopolitanism in letters. During his lifetime Beyle was isolated, and had a pride in isolation. Born at Grenoble in 1783, he had learnt, during an unhappy childhood, to conceal his natural sensibility; in later years this reserve was pushed to affectation. He served under Napoleon with coolness and energy; he hated the Restoration, and, a lover of Italian manners and Italian music, he chose Milan for his place of abode. The eighteenth-century materialists were the masters of his intellect; "the only excuse for God," he declared, "is that he does not exist"; in man he saw a being whose end is pleasure, whose law is egoism, and who affords a curious field for studying the dynamics of the passions. He honoured Napoleon as an incarnation of force, the greatest of the *condottieri*. He loved the Italian character because the passions in Italy manifest themselves with the sudden outbreaks of nature. He indulged his own passions as a refuge from ennui, and turned the scrutiny of his intelligence upon every operation of his heart. Fearing to be duped, he became the dupe of his own philosophy. He aided the romantic movement by the paradox that all the true

classical writers were romantic in their own day—they sought to please their time; the pseudo-classical writers attempt to maintain a lifeless tradition. But he had little in common with the romantic school, except a love for Shakespeare, a certain feeling for local colour, and an interest in the study of passion; the effusion and exaltation of romance repelled him; he laboured to be "dry," and often succeeded to perfection.

His analytical study *De l'Amour*, resting on a sensual basis, has all the depth and penetration which is possible to a shallow philosophy. His notes on travel and art anticipate in an informal way the method of criticism which became a system in the hands of Taine; in a line, in a phrase, he resolves the artist into the resultant of environing forces. His novels are studies in the mechanics of the passions and the will. Human energy, which had a happy outlet in the Napoleonic wars, must seek a new career in Restoration days. Julien Sorel, the low-born hero of *Le Rouge et le Noir*, finding the red coat impossible, must don the priestly black as a cloak for his ambition. Hypocrite, seducer, and assassin, he ends his career under the knife of the guillotine. *La Chartreuse de Parme* exhibits the manners, characters, intrigues of nineteenth-century Italy, with a remarkable episode which gives a soldier's experiences of the field of Waterloo. In the artist's plastic power Beyle was wholly wanting; a collection of ingenious observations in psychology may be of rare value, but it does not constitute a work of art. His writings are a whetstone for the intelligence, but we must bring intelligence to its use, else it will grind down or break the blade. In 1842 he died, desiring to perpetuate his expatriation by the epitaph which names him Arrigo Beyle Milanese.

III

Lyrical and idealistic are epithets which a critic is tempted to affix to the novels of George Sand; but from her early lyrical manner she advanced to perfect idyllic narrative; and while she idealised, she observed, incorporating in her best work the results of a patient and faithful study of reality. A vaguer word may be applied to whatever she wrote; offspring of her idealism or her realism, it is always in a true sense poetic.

Lucile-Aurore Dupin, a descendant of Marshal Saxe, was born in Paris in 1804, the daughter of Lieutenant Dupin and a mother of humble origin—a child at once of the aristocracy and of the people. Her early years were passed in Berri, at the country-house of her grandmother. Strong, calm, ruminating, bovine in temperament, she had a large heart and an ardent imagination. The woods, the flowers, the pastoral heights and hollows, the furrows of the fields, the little peasants, the hemp-dressers of the farm, their processes of life, their store of old tales and rural superstitions made up her earliest education. Already endless stories shaped themselves in her brain. At thirteen she was sent to be educated in a Paris convent; from the boisterous moods which seclusion encouraged, she sank of a sudden into depths of religious reverie, or rose to heights of religious exaltation, not to be forgotten when afterwards she wrote *Spiridion*. The country cooled her devout ardour; she read widely, poets, historians, philosophers, without method and with boundless delight; the *Génie du Christianisme* replaced the *Imitation;* Rousseau and Byron followed Chateaubriand,

and romance in her heart put on the form of melancholy. At eighteen the passive Aurore was married to M. Dudevant, whose worst fault was the absence of those qualities of heart and brain which make wedded union a happiness. Two children were born; and having obtained her freedom and a scanty allowance, Madame Dudevant in 1831, in possession of her son and daughter, resolved upon trying to obtain a livelihood in the capital.

Perhaps she could paint birds and flowers on cigar-cases and snuff-boxes; happily her hopes received small encouragement. Perhaps she could succeed in journalism under her friend Delatouche; she proved wholly wanting in cleverness; her imagination had wings; it could not hop on the perch; before she had begun the beginning of an article the column must end. With her compatriot Jules Sandeau, she attempted a novel—*Rose et Blanche*. "Sand" and Sandeau were fraternal names; a countryman of Berri was traditionally George. Henceforth the young Bohemian, who traversed the *quais* and streets in masculine garb, should be GEORGE SAND.

To write novels was to her only a process of nature; she seated herself before her table at ten o'clock, with scarcely a plot, and only the slightest acquaintance with her characters; until five in the evening, while her hand guided a pen, the novel wrote itself. Next day and the next it was the same. By-and-by the novel had written itself in full, and another was unfolding. Not that she composed mechanically; her stories were not manufactured; they grew—grew with facility and in free abundance. At first, a disciple of Rousseau and Chateaubriand, her theme was the romance of love.

In *Indiana, Valentine, Lélia, Jacques*, she vindicated the supposed rights of passion. These novels are lyrical cries of a heart that had been wounded; protests against the crime of loveless marriage, against the tyranny of man, the servitude of woman; pleas for the individualism of the soul—superficial in thought, ill-balanced in feeling, unequal in style, yet rising to passages of rare poetic beauty, and often admirable in descriptive power. The imagination of George Sand had translated her private experiences into romance; yet she, the spectator of her own inventions, possessed of a fund of sanity which underlay the agitations of her genius, while she lent herself to her creations, plied her pen with a steady hand from day to day. Unwise and blameful in conduct she might be for a season; she wronged her own life, and helped to ruin the life of Musset, who had neither her discretion nor her years; but when the inevitable rupture came she could return to her better self.

Through *André, Simon, Mauprat*—the last a tale of love subduing and purifying the savage instincts in man—her art advanced in sureness and in strength. Singularly accessible to external influences, singularly receptive of ideas, the full significance and relations of which she failed to comprehend, she felt the force of intelligences stronger than her own—of Lamennais, of Ledru-Rollin, of Jean Raynaud, of Pierre Leroux. Mystical religious sentiment, an ardent enthusiasm of humanity, mingled in her mind with all the discordant formulas of socialism. From 1840 to 1848 her love and large generosity of nature found satisfaction in the ideals and the hopes of social reform. Her novels *Consuelo, Jeanne, Le Meunier d'Angibault, Le Péché de M. Antoine*, become expositions

of a thesis, or are diverted from their true development to advocate a cause. The art suffers. *Jeanne*, so admirable in its rural heroine, wanders from nature to humanitarian symbolism; *Consuelo*, in which the writer studies so happily the artistic temperament, too often loses itself in a confusion of ill-understood ideas and tedious declamation. But the gain of escape from the egoism of passion to a more disinterested, even if a doctrinaire, view of life was great. George Sand was finding her way.

Indeed, while writing novels in this her second manner, she had found her way; her third manner was attained before the second had lost its attraction. *La Mare au Diable* belongs to the year 1846; *La Petite Fadette*, to the year of Revolution, 1848, which George Sand, ever an optimist, hailed with joy; *François le Champi* is but two years later. In these delightful tales she returns from humanitarian theories to the fields of Berri, to humble walks, and to the huts where poor men lie. The genuine idyll of French peasant life was new to French literature; the better soul of rural France, George Sand found deep within herself; she had read the external circumstances and incidents of country life with an eye as faithful in observation as that of any student who dignifies his collection of human documents with the style and title of realism in art; with a sense of beauty and the instincts of affection she merged herself in what she saw; her feeling for nature is realised in gracious art, and her art seems itself to be nature.

In the novels of her latest years she moved from Berri to other regions of France, and interpreted aristocratic together with peasant life. Old, experienced, infinitely good and attaching, she has tales for her grandchildren,

and romances—*Jean de la Roche*, *Le Marquis de Villemer*, and the rest—for her other grandchildren the public. The soul of the peasant, of the artist, of the man who must lean upon a stronger woman's arm, of the girl—neither child nor fully adult—she entered into with deepest and truest sympathy. The simple, austere, stoical, heroic man she admired as one above her. Her style at its best, flowing without impetuosity, full and pure without commotion, harmonious without complex involutions, can mirror beauty as faithfully and as magically as an inland river. "Calme, toujours plus calme," was a frequent utterance of her declining years. "Ne détruisez pas la verdure" were her latest words. In 1876 George Sand died. Her memoirs and her correspondence make us intimate with a spirit, amid all its errors, sweet, generous, and gaining through experience a wisdom for the season of old age.

IV

George Sand may be described as an "idealist," if we add the words "with a remarkable gift for observation." Her great contemporary HONORÉ DE BALZAC is named a realist, but he was a realist haunted or attacked by phantasms and nightmares of romance. Born in 1799 at Tours, son of an advocate turned military commissariat-agent, Honoré de Balzac, after some training in the law, resolved to write, and, if possible, not to starve. With his robust frame, his resolute will, manifest in a face coarsely powerful, his large good-nature, his large egoism, his audacity of brain, it seemed as if he might shoulder his way through the crowd to fortune and to

fame. But fortune and fame were hard to come at. His tragedy *Cromwell* was condemned by all who saw the manuscript; his novels were published, and lie deep in their refuge under the waters of oblivion. He tried the trades of publisher, printer, type-founder, and succeeded in encumbering himself with debt. At length in 1829 *Le Dernier Chouan*, a half-historical tale of Brittany in 1800, not uninfluenced by Scott, was received with a measure of favour.

Next year Balzac found his truer self, overlaid with journalism, pamphleteering, and miscellaneous writing, in a Dutch painting of bourgeois life, *La Maison du Chat-qui-pelote*, which relates the sorrows of the draper's daughter, Augustine, drawn from her native sphere by an artist's love. From the day that Balzac began to wield his pen with power to the day, in 1850, when he died, exhausted by the passion of his brain, his own life was concentrated in that of the creatures of his imagination. He had friends, and married one of the oldest of them, Madame Hanska, shortly before his death. Sometimes for a little while he wandered away from his desk. More than once he made wild attempts to secure wealth by commercial enterprise or speculation. These were adventures or incidents of his existence. That existence itself is summed up in the volumes of his *Human Comedy*. He wrote with desperate resolve and a violence of imagination; he attacked the printer's proof as if it were crude material on which to work. At six in the evening he retired to sleep; he rose at the noon of night, urged on his brain with cups of coffee, and covered page after page of manuscript, until the noon of day released him. So it went on for nearly twenty years, until the intemperance of toil had worn the strong man out.

There is something gross in Balzac's genius; he has little wit, little delicacy, no sense of measure, no fine self-criticism, no lightness of touch, small insight into the life of refined society, an imperfect sense of natural beauty, a readiness to accept vulgar marvels as the equivalent of spiritual mysteries; he is monarchical without the sentiment of chivalric loyalty, a Catholic without the sentiment of religion; he piles sentence on sentence, hard and heavy as the accumulated stones of a cairn. Did he love his art for its own sake? It must have been so; but he esteemed it also as an implement of power, as the means of pushing towards fame and grasping gold.

Within the gross body of his genius, however, an intense flame burnt. He had a vivid sense of life, a perception of all that can be seen and handled, an eager interest in reality, a vast passion for *things*, an inexhaustible curiosity about the machinery of society, a feeling, exultant or cynical, of the battle of existence, of the conflict for wealth and power, with its triumphs and defeats, its display of fierce volition, its pushing aside of the feeble, its trampling of the fallen, its grandeur, its meanness, its obscure heroisms, and the cruelties of its pathos. He flung himself on the life of society with a desperate energy of inspection, and tried to make the vast array surrender to his imagination. And across his vision of reality shot strange beams and shafts of romantic illumination—sometimes vulgar theatrical lights, sometimes gleams like those which add a new reality of wonder to the etchings of Rembrandt. What he saw with the eyes of the senses or those of the imagination he could evoke without the loss of any fragment of its life, and could transfer it to the brain of his reader as a vision from which escape is impossible.

The higher world of aristocratic refinement, the grace and natural delicacy of virginal souls, in general eluded Balzac's observation. He found it hard to imagine a lady; still harder—though he tried and half succeeded—to conceive the mystery of a young girl's mind, in which the airs of morning are nimble and sweet. The gross bourgeois world, which he detested, and a world yet humbler were his special sphere. He studied its various elements in their environment; a street, a house, a chamber is as much to him as a human being, for it is part of the creature's shell, shaped to its uses, corresponding to its nature, limiting its action. He has created a population of persons which numbers two thousand. Where Balzac does not fail, each of these is a complete individual; in the prominent figures a controlling passion is the centre of moral life—the greed of money, the desire for distinction, the lust for power, some instinct or mania of animal affection. The individual exists in a group; power circulates from inanimate objects to the living actors of his tale; the environment is an accomplice in the action; power circulates from member to member of the group; finally, group and group enter into correspondence or conflict; and still above the turmoil is heard the ground-swell of the tide of Paris.

The change from the Renés and Obermanns of melancholy romance was great. But in the government of Louis-Philippe the bourgeoisie triumphed; and Balzac hated the bourgeoisie. From 1830 to 1840 were his greatest years, which include the *Peau de Chagrin*, *Eugénie Grandet*, *La Recherche de l'Absolu*, *Le Père Goriot*, and other masterpieces. To name their titles would be to recite a Homeric catalogue. At an early date Balzac conceived the idea of connecting his tales in groups. They acquired

their collective title, *La Comédie Humaine*, in 1842. He would exhibit human documents illustrating the whole social life of his time; "the administration, the church, the army, the judicature, the aristocracy, the bourgeoisie, the prolétariat, the peasantry, the artists, the journalists, the men of letters, the actors, . . . the shopkeepers of every degree, the criminals," should all appear in his vast tableau of society. His record should include scenes from private life, scenes from Parisian, provincial, political, military, rural life, with philosophical studies in narrative and analytic treatises on the passions. The spirit of system took hold upon Balzac; he had, in common with Victor Hugo, a gift for imposing upon himself with the charlatanry of pseudo-ideas; to observe, to analyse, to evoke with his imagination was not enough; he also would be among the philosophers—and Balzac's philosophy is often pretentious and vulgar, it is often banal. Outside the general scheme of the human comedy lie his unsuccessful attempts for the theatre, and the *Contes Drolatiques*, in which the pseudo-antique Rabelaisian manner and the affluent power do not entirely atone for the anachronism of a grossness more natural in the sixteenth than in the nineteenth century.

V

Was it possible to be romantic without being lyrical? Was it possible to produce purely objective work, reserving one's own personality, and glancing at one's audience only with an occasional look of superior irony? Such was the task essayed by PROSPER MÉRIMÉE (1803–70). With some points of resemblance in character to Beyle,

whose ideas were influential on his mind, Mérimée possessed the plastic imagination and the craftsman's skill, in which Beyle was deficient. "He is a gentleman," said Cousin, and the words might serve for Mérimée's epitaph; a gentleman not of nature's making, or God Almighty's kind, but constructed in faultless bearing according to the rules. Such a gentleman must betray no sensibility, must express no sentiment, must indulge no enthusiasm, must attach himself to no faith, must be superior to all human infirmities, except the infirmity of a pose which is impressive only by its correctness; he may be cynical, if the cynicism is wholly free from emphasis; he may be ironical, if the irony is sufficiently disguised; he may mystify his fellows, if he keeps the pleasure of mystification for his private amusement. Should he happen to be an artist, he must appear to be only a dilettante. He must never incur ridicule, and yet his whole attitude may be ridiculous.

Such a gentleman was Prosper Mérimée. He had the gift of imagination, psychological insight, the artist's shaping hand. His early romantic plays were put forth as those of Clara Gazul, a Spanish *comédienne*. His Illyrian poems, *La Guzla*, were the work of an imaginary Hyacinthe Maglanovich, and Mérimée could smile gently at the credulity of a learned public. He took up the short story where Xavier de Maistre, who had known how to be both pathetic and amiably humorous, and Charles Nodier, who had given play to a graceful fantasy, left it. He purged it of sentiment, he reduced fantasy to the law of the imagination, and produced such works as *Carmen* and *Colomba*, each one a little masterpiece of psychological truth, of temperate local colour, of faultless narrative, of pure objective art.

The public must not suppose that he cares for his characters or what befell them; he is an archæologist, a savant, and only by accident a teller of tales. Mérimée had more sensibility than he would confess; it shows itself for moments in the posthumous *Lettres à une Inconnue;* but he has always a bearing-rein of ironical pessimism to hold his sensibility in check. The egoism of the romantic school appears in Mérimée inverted; it is the egoism not of effusion but of disdainful reserve.[1]

[1] It is one of Mérimée's merits that he awakened in France an interest in Russian literature.

CHAPTER V

HISTORY—LITERARY CRITICISM

I

THE progress of historical literature in the nineteenth century was aided by the change which had taken place in philosophical opinion; instead of a rigid system of abstract ideas, which disdained the thought of past ages as superstition, had come an eclecticism guided by spiritual beliefs. The religions of various lands and various ages were viewed with sympathetic interest; the breach of continuity from mediæval to modern times was repaired; the revolutionary spirit of individualism gave way before a broader concern for society; the temper in politics grew more cautious and less dogmatic; the great events of recent years engendered historical reflection; literary art was renewed by the awakening of the romantic imagination.

The historical learning of the Empire is represented by Daunou, an explorer in French literature; by Ginguené, the literary historian of Italy; by Michaud, who devoted his best years to a *History of the Crusades*. In his *De la Religion* (1824–31) Benjamin Constant, in Restoration days, traced the progress of the religious sentiment, cleaving its way through dogma and ordinance to a free and full development. Sismondi (1773–1842), in

his *Histoire des Français*, investigated such sources as were accessible to him, studied economic facts, and in a liberal spirit exhibited the life of the nation, and not merely the acts of monarchs or the intrigues of statesmen. His wide, though not profound, erudition comprehended Italy as well as France; the *Histoire des Républiques Italiennes* is the chart of a difficult labyrinth. The method of disinterested narrative, which abstains from ethical judgments, propounds no thesis, and aims at no doctrinaire conclusion, was followed by Barante in his *Histoire des Ducs de Bourgogne*. The precept of Quintilian expresses his rule: "Scribitur ad narrandum, non ad probandum."

Each school of nineteenth-century thought has had its historical exponents. Liberal Catholicism is represented by Montalembert, Ozanam, De Broglie; socialism, by Louis Blanc; a patriotic Cæsarism, by Thiers; the democratic school, by Michelet and Quinet; philosophic liberalism, by Guizot, Mignet, and Tocqueville.

Augustin Thierry (1795–1856) nobly led the way. Some pages of Chateaubriand, full of the sentiment of the past, were his first inspiration; at a later time the influence of Fauriel and the novels of Walter Scott, "the master of historical divination," confirmed him in his sense of the uses of imagination as an aid to the scholarship of history. For a time he acted as secretary to Saint-Simon, and under his influence proposed a scheme for a community of European peoples which should leave intact the nationality of each. Then he parted from his master, to pursue his way in independence. It seemed to him that the social condition and the revolutions of modern Europe had their origins in the Germanic invasions, and especially in the Norman

Conquest of England. As he read the great collection of the original historians of France and Gaul, he grew indignant against the modern travesties named history, indignant against writers without erudition, who could not see, and writers without imagination, who could not depict. The conflict of races—Saxons and Normans in England, Gauls and Franks in his own country—remained with him as a dominant idea, but he would not lose himself in generalisations; he would involve the abstract in concrete details; he would see, and he would depict. There was much philosophy in abstaining from philosophy overmuch. The *Lettres sur l'Histoire de France* were followed in 1825 by the *Histoire de la Conquête de l'Angleterre*, in which the art of historiography attained a perfection previously unknown. Through charter and chronicle, Thierry had reached the spirit of the past. He had prophesied upon the dry bones and to the wind, and the dry bones lived. As a liberal, he had been interested in contemporary politics. His political ardour had given him that historical perspicacity which enabled him to discover the soul behind an ancient text.

In 1826 Thierry, the martyr of his passionate studies, suffered the calamity of blindness. With the aid of his distinguished brother, of friends, and secretaries—above all, with the aid of the devoted woman who became his wife, he pursued his work. The *Récits des Temps Mérovingiens* and the *Essai sur l'Histoire de la Formation du Tiers État* were the labours of a sightless scholar. His passion for perfection was greater than ever; twenty, fifteen lines a day contented him, if his idea was rendered clear and enduring in faultless form. Paralysis made its steady advance; still he kept his intellect above

his infirmities, and followed truth and beauty. On May 22, 1856, he woke his attendant at four in the morning, and dictated with laboured speech the alteration of a phrase for the revised *Conquête*. On the same day, "insatiable of perfection," Thierry died. He is not, either in substance, thought, or style, the greatest of modern French historians; but, more than any other, he was an initiator.

The life of FRANÇOIS GUIZOT—great and venerable name—is a portion of the history of his country. Born at Nîmes in 1787, of an honourable Protestant family, he died, with a verse of his favourite Corneille or a text of Scripture on his lips, in 1874. Austere without severity, simple in habit without rudeness, indomitable in courage, imperious in will, gravely eloquent, he had at once the liberality and the narrowness of the middle classes, which he represented when in power. A threefold task, as he conceived, lies before the historian: he must ascertain facts; he must co-ordinate these facts under laws, studying the anatomy and the physiology of society; finally, he must present the external physiognomy of the facts. Guizot was not endowed with the artist's imagination; he had no sense of life, of colour, of literary style; he was a thinker, who saw the life of the past through the medium of ideas; he does not in his pages evoke a world of animated forms, of passionate hearts, of vivid incidents; he distinguishes social forces, with a view to arrive at principles; he considers those forces in their play one upon another.

The *Histoire Générale de la Civilisation en Europe* and the *Histoire de la Civilisation en France* consist of lectures delivered from 1828 to 1830 at the Sorbonne.[1] Guizot

[1] The *History of Civilisation in France* closes with the fourteenth century.

recognised that the study of institutions must be preceded by a study of the society which has given them birth. In the progress of civilisation he saw not merely the development of communities, but also that of the individual. The civilisation of Europe, he held, was most intelligibly exhibited in that of France, where, more than in other countries, intellectual and social development have moved hand in hand, where general ideas and doctrines have always accompanied great events and public revolutions. The key to the meaning of French history he found in the tendency towards national and political unity. From the tenth to the fourteenth century four great forces met in co-operation or in conflict—royalty, the feudal system, the communes, the Church. Feudalism fell; a great monarchy arose upon its ruins. The human mind asserted its spiritual independence in the Protestant reformation. The *tiers état* was constantly advancing in strength. The power of the monarchy, dominant in the seventeenth century, declined in the century that followed; the power of the people increased. In modern society the elements of national life are reduced to two—the government on the one hand, the people on the other; how to harmonise these elements is the problem of modern politics. As a capital example for the French bourgeoisie, Guizot, returning to an early work, made a special study of the great English revolution of the seventeenth century. In Germany, of the preceding century, the revolution was religious and not political. In France, of the succeeding century, the revolution was political and not religious. The rare good fortune of England lay in the fact that the spirit of religious faith and the spirit of political freedom

ruled together, and co-operated towards a common result.

The work of FRANÇOIS MIGNET (1796–1884), eminent for its research, exactitude, clearness, ordonnance, has been censured for its historical fatalism. In reality Mignet's mind was too studious of facts to be dominated by a theory. He recognised the great forces which guide and control events; he recognised also the power and freedom of the individual will. His early *Histoire de la Révolution Française* is a sane and lucid arrangement of material that came to his hands in chaotic masses. His later and more important writings deal with his special province, the sixteenth century; his method, as he advanced, grew more completely objective; we discern his ideas through the lines of a well-proportioned architecture.

The analytic method of Guizot, supported by a method of patient induction, was applied by ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE (1805–59) to the study of the great phenomenon of modern democracy. Limiting the area of investigation to America, which he had visited on a public mission, he investigated the political organisation, the manners and morals, the ideas, the habits of thought and feeling of the United States as influenced by the democratic equality of conditions. He wrote as a liberal in whom the spirit of individualism was active. He regarded the progress of democracy in the modern world as inevitable; he perceived the dangers—formidable for society and for individual character—which accompany that progress; he believed that by foresight and wise ordering many of the dangers could be averted. The fears and hopes of the citizen guided and sustained in Tocqueville a philosophical intelligence. Turning from

America to France, he designed to disengage from the tangle of events the true historical significance of the Revolution. Only one volume, *L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution*, was accomplished. It can stand alone as a work of capital importance. In the great upheaval he saw that all was not progress; the centralisation of power under the old régime remained, and was rendered even more formidable than before; the sentiment of equality continued to advance in its inevitable career; unhappily the spirit of liberty was not always its companion, its moderator, or its guide.

ADOLPHE THIERS (1797–1877) was engaged at the same time as Mignet, his lifelong friend, upon a history of the French Revolution (1823–27). The same liberal principles were held in common by the young authors. Their methods differed widely: Mignet's orderly and compact narration was luminous through its skilful arrangement; Thiers' *Histoire* was copious, facile, brilliant, more just in its general conception than exact in statement, a plea for revolutionary patriotism as against the royalist reaction of the day, and not without influence in preparing the spirit of the country for the approaching Revolution of July. His *Histoire du Consulat et de l'Empire* (1845–62) is the great achievement of Thiers' maturity; journalist, orator, minister of state, until he became the chief of stricken France in 1871 his highest claim to be remembered was this vast record of his country's glory. He had an appetite for facts; no detail—the price of bread, of soap, of candles—was a matter of indifference to him; he could not show too many things, or show them too clearly; his supreme quality was intelligence; his passion was the pride of patriotism; his foible was the vanity of military success, the zeal of a chauvinist. He

was a liberal; but Napoleon summed up France, and won her battles, therefore Napoleon, the great captain who "made war with his genius and politics with his passions," must be for ever magnified. The *coup d'état* of the third Napoleon owed a debt to the liberal historian who had reconstructed the Napoleonic legend. The campaigns and battle-pieces of Thiers are unsurpassed in their kind. His style in narrative is facile, abundant, animated, and so transparent that nothing seems to intervene between the object and the reader who has become a spectator; a style negligent at times and even incorrect, adding no charm of its own to the lucid presentation of things.

JULES MICHELET, the greatest imaginative restorer of the past, the greatest historical interpreter of the soul of ancient France, was born in 1798 in Paris, an infant seemingly too frail and nervous to remain alive. His early years gave him experience, brave and pathetic, of the hardships of the poor. His father, an unsuccessful printer, often found it difficult to procure bread or fuel for his household; but he resolved that his son should receive an education. The boy, of a fine and sensitive organisation, knew cold and hunger; he watched his mother toiling, and from day to day declining in health. Two sources of consolation he found—the *Imitation*, which told him of a Divine refuge from sorrow, and the Museum of French monuments, which made him forget all present distress in visions of the vanished centuries. Mocked and persecuted by his schoolfellows, he never lost courage, and had the joy of rewarding his parents with the cross won by his schoolboy theme. In happy country days his aunt Alexis told him legendary tales and read to him the old chroniclers of France. Michelet

vocation was before long revealed, and its summons was irresistible.

In 1827 he published his earliest works, the *Précis de l'Histoire Moderne*, a modest survey of a wide field, in which genius illuminated scholarship, and a translation of the *Scienza Nuova* of Vico, the master who impressed him with the thought that humanity is in a constant process of creation under the influence of the Divine ideas. The *Histoire Romaine* and the *Introduction à l'Histoire Universelle* followed ; the latter a little book, written with incredible ardour under the inspiration of the days of July. His friend Quinet had taught him to see in history an ever-broadening combat for freedom—in Michelet's words, "an eternal July," and the exposition of this idea was of the nature of a philosophical entrancement.

A teacher at the École Normale, appointed chief of the historical section of the National Archives in 1831, Guizot's substitute at the Sorbonne in 1833, professor of history and morals at the Collège de France in 1838, Michelet lived in and for the life of his people and of his land. The *Histoire de France*, begun in 1830, was completed thirty-seven years later. After the disasters of the war of 1870–71, with failing strength the author resumed his labours, endeavouring to add, as it were, an appendix on the nineteenth century.

A passionate searcher among original sources, published and unpublished, handling documents as if they were things of flesh and blood, seeing the outward forms of existence with the imaginative eye, pressing through these to the soul of each successive epoch, possessed by an immense pity for the obscure generations of human toilers, having, more than almost any other modern writer, Virgil's gift of tears, ardent in admiration, ardent in

indignation, with ideas impregnated by emotions, and emotions quickened by ideas, Michelet set himself to resuscitate the buried past. It seemed to him that his eminent predecessors—Guizot, Mignet, Thiers, Thierry—had each envisaged history from some special point of view. Each had too little of the outward body or too little of the inward soul of history. Michelet dared to hope that a resurrection of the integral life of the dead centuries was possible. All or nothing was his word. It was a bold venture, but it was a venture, or rather an act, of faith. Thierry had been tyrannised by the idea of the race: the race is much, but the people does not march in the air; it has a geographical basis; it draws its nutriment from a particular soil. Michelet, at the moment of his narrative when France began to have a life distinct from Germany, enters upon a survey of its geography, in which the physiognomy and the genius of each region are studied as if each were a separate living creature, and the character of France itself is discovered in the cohesion or the unity of its various parts. Reaching the tenth and eleventh centuries, he feels the sadness of their torpor and their violence; yet humanity was living, and soon in the enthusiasm of Gothic art and the enthusiasm of the Crusades the sacred aspirations of the soul had their manifestation. At the close of the mediæval period everything seems to droop and decay; no! it was then, during the Hundred Years' War, that the national consciousness was born, and patriotism was incarnated in an armed shepherdess, child of the people.

By the thirteenth year of his labours—1843—Michelet had traversed the mediæval epoch, and reached the close of the reign of Louis XI. There he paused. Seeing one day high on the tower of Reims Cathedral, below which

the kings of France received their consecration, a group or garland of tortured and mutilated figures carved in stone, the thought possessed him that the soul and faith of the people should be confirmed within his own soul before he could trust himself to treat of the age of the great monarchy. He leaped at once the intervening centuries, and was at work during eight years—from 1845 to 1853—on the French Revolution. He found a hero for his revolutionary epic in the people.

The temper of 1848 was hardly the temper in which the earlier Revolution could be judiciously investigated. Michelet and Quinet had added to their democratic zeal the passions connected with an anti-clerical campaign. The violence of liberalism was displayed in *Des Jésuites*, and *Du Prêtre, de la Femme et de la Famille*. When the historian returned to the sixteenth century his spirit had undergone a change: he adored the Middle Ages; but was it not the period of the domination of the Church, and how could it be other than evil? He could no longer be a mere historian; he must also be a prophet. The volumes which treat of the Reformation, the Renaissance, the wars of religion, are as brilliant as earlier volumes, but they are less balanced and less coherent. The equilibrium between Michelet's intellect and his imagination, between his ideas and his passions, was disturbed, if not destroyed.

Michelet, who had been deprived of his chair in the Collège de France, lost also his post in the Archives upon his refusal, in 1852, to swear allegiance to the Emperor. Near Nantes in his tempest-beaten home, near Genoa in a fold of the Apennines, where he watched the lizards sleep or slide, a great appeasement came upon his spirit. He had interpreted the soul of the people; he

would now interpret the soul of humbler kinsfolk—the bird, the insect; he would interpret the inarticulate soul of the mountain and the sea. He studied other documents—the documents of nature—with a passion of love, read their meanings, and mingled as before his own spirit with theirs. *L'Oiseau*, *L'Insecte*, *La Mer*, *La Montagne*, are canticles in prose by a learned lover of the external world, rather than essays in science; often extravagant in style, often extreme in sentiment, and uncontrolled in imagination, but always the betrayals of genius.

Michelet's faults as an historian are great, and such as readily strike an English reader. His rash generalisations, his lyrical outbreaks, his Pindaric excitement, his verbiage assuming the place of ideas, his romantic excess, his violence in ecclesiastical affairs, his hostility to our country, his mysticism touched with sensuality, his insistence on physiological details, his quick and irregular utterance—these trouble at times his imaginative insight, and mar his profound science in documents. He died at Hyères in 1874, hoping that God would grant him reunion with his lost ones, and the joys promised to those who have sought and loved.

Edgar Quinet (1803–1875), the friend and brother-in-arms of Michelet in his attack upon the Jesuits, born at Bourg, of a Catholic father and a Protestant mother, approached the study of literature and history with that tendency to large *vues d'ensemble* which was natural to his mind, and which had been strengthened by discipleship to Herder. Happy in temper, sound of conscience, generous of heart, he illuminated many subjects, and was a complete master of none. A poet of lofty intentions, in his *Ahasvérus* (1833)—the wandering Jew, typ-

of humanity in its endless Odyssey—in his *Napoléon*, his *Prométhée*, his vast encyclopædic allegory *Merlin l'Enchanteur* (1860), his poetry lacked form, and yielded itself to the rhetoric of the intellect.

In the *Génie des Religions* Quinet endeavoured to exhibit the religious idea as the germinative power of civilisation, giving its special character to the political and social idea. *La Révolution*, which is perhaps his most important work, attempts to replace the Revolutionary hero-worship, the Girondin and Jacobin legends, by a faithful interpretation of the meaning of events. The principles of modern society and the principles of the Roman Catholic Church, Quinet regarded as incapable of conciliation. In the incompetence of the leaders to perceive and apply this truth, and in the fatal logic of their violent and anarchic methods, lay, as he believed, the causes of the failure which followed the bright hopes of 1789. In 1848 Quinet was upon the barricades; the Empire drove him into exile. In his elder years, like Michelet, he found a new delight in the study of nature. *La Création* (1870) exhibits the science of nature and that of human history as presenting the same laws and requiring kindred methods. It closes with the prophecy of science that creation is not yet fully accomplished, and that a nobler race will enter into the heritage of our humanity.

II

Literary criticism in the eighteenth century had been the criticism of taste or the criticism of dogma; in the nineteenth century it became naturalistic—a natural history of individual minds and their products, a natural

history of works of art as formed or modified by social, political, and moral environments, and by the tendencies of races. Such criticism must inevitably have followed the growth of the comparative study of literatures in an age dominated by the scientific spirit. If we are to name any single writer as its founder, we must name Mme. de Staël. The French nation, she explained in *L'Allemagne*, inclines towards what is classical; the Teutonic nations incline towards what is romantic. She cares not to say whether classical or romantic art should be preferred; it is enough to show that the difference of taste results not from accidental causes, but from the primitive sources of imagination and of thought.

The historical tendency, proceeding from the eighteenth century, influenced alike the study of philosophy, of politics, and of literature. While Cousin gave an historical interpretation of philosophy, and Guizot applied history to the exposition of politics, a third eminent professor, ABEL-FRANÇOIS VILLEMAIN (1790–1870) was illuminating literature with the light of history. An accomplished classical scholar, a student of English, Italian, and Spanish authors, Villemain, in his *Tableau de la Littérature au Moyen Âge*, and his more admirable *Tableau de la Littérature au XVIII^e Siècle*, viewed a wide prospect, and could not apply a narrow rule to the measurement of all that he saw. He did not formulate a method of criticism; but instinctively he directed criticism towards history. He perceived the correspondence between literary products and the other phenomena of the age; he observed the movement in the spirit of a period; he passed from country to country; he made use of biography as an aid in the study of letters. His learning was at times defective; his views often superficial; he suffered

from his desire to entertain his audience or to capture them by rhetoric. Yet Villemain served letters well, and, accepted as a master by the young critics of the *Globe*, he prepared the way for Sainte-Beuve.

While such criticism as that of Villemain was maintained by Saint-Marc Girardin (1801–73), professor of French poetry at the Sorbonne, the dogmatic or doctrinaire school of criticism was represented with rare ability by DÉSIRÉ NISARD (1806–88). His capital work, the *Histoire de la Littérature Française*, the labour of many years, is distinguished by a magisterial application of ideas to the decision of literary questions. Criticism with Nisard is not a natural history of minds, nor a study of historical developments, so much as the judgment of literary art in the light of reason. He confronts each book on which he pronounces judgment with that ideal of its species which he has formed in his own mind: he compares it with the ideal of the genius of France, which attains its highest ends rather through discipline than through freedom; he compares it with the ideal of the French language; finally, he compares it with the ideal of humanity as seen in the best literature of the world. According to the result of the comparison he delivers condemnation or awards the crown. In French literature, at its best, he perceives a marvellous equilibrium of the faculties under the control of reason; it applies general ideas to life; it avoids individual caprice; it dreads the chimeras of imagination; it is eminently rational; it embodies ideas in just and measured form. Such literature Nisard found in the great age of Louis XIV. Certain gains there may have been in the eighteenth century, but these gains were more than counterbalanced by losses. To disprove the

saying that there is no disputing about tastes, to establish an order and a hierarchy in letters, to regulate intellectual pleasures, was Nisard's aim; but in attempting to constitute an exact science founded upon general principles, he too often derived those principles from the attractions and repulsions of his individual taste. Criticism retrograded in his hands; yet, in retrograding, it took up a strong position: the influence of such a teacher was not untimely when facile sympathies required the guidance or the check of a director.

The admirable critic of the romantic school, CHARLES-AUGUSTIN SAINTE-BEUVE (1804–69), developed, as time went on, into the great critic of the naturalistic method. In his *Tableau de la Poésie Française au XVI^e Siècle* he found ancestors for the romantic poets as much older than the ancestors of classical art in France as Ronsard is older than Malherbe. Wandering endlessly from author to author in his *Portraits Littéraires* and *Portraits Contemporains*, he studied in all its details what we may term the physiology of each. The long research of spirits connected with his most sustained work, *Port-Royal*, led him to recognise certain types or families under which the various minds of men can be grouped and classified. During a quarter of a century he investigated, distinguished, defined in the vast collection of little monographs which form the *Causeries du Lundi* and the *Nouveaux Lundis*. They formed, as it were, a natural history of intellects and temperaments; they established a new method, and illustrated that method by a multitude of examples.

Never was there a more mobile spirit; but he was as exact and sure-footed as he was mobile. When we have allowed for certain personal jealousies or hostilities, and

for an excessive attraction towards what may be called the morbid anatomy of minds, we may give our confidence with scarcely a limit to the psychologist critic Sainte-Beuve. Poet, novelist, student of medicine, sceptic, believer, socialist, imperialist—he traversed every region of ideas; as soon as he understood each position he was free to leave it behind. He did not pretend to reduce criticism to a science; he hoped that at length, as the result of numberless observations, something like a science might come into existence. Meanwhile he would cultivate the relative and distrust the absolute. He would study literary products through the persons of their authors; he would examine each detail; he would inquire into the physical characteristics of the subject of his investigation; view him through his ancestry and among his kinsfolk; observe him in the process of education; discover him among his friends and contemporaries; note the moment when his genius first unfolded itself; note the moment when it was first touched with decay; approach him through admirers and disciples; approach him through his antagonists or those whom he repelled; and at last, if that were possible, find some illuminating word which resumes the results of a completed study. There is no "code Sainte-Beuve" by which off-hand to pronounce literary judgments; a method of Sainte-Beuve there is, and it is the method which has best served the study of literature in the nineteenth century.

Here this survey of a wide field finds its limit. The course of French literature since 1850 may be studied in current criticism; it does not yet come within the scope

of literary history. The product of these years has been manifold and great; their literary importance is attested by the names—among many others—of Leconte de Lisle, Sully Prudhomme, Verlaine, in non-dramatic poetry; of Augier and the younger Dumas in the theatre; of Flaubert, Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, Zola, Daudet, Bourget, Pierre Loti, Anatole France, in fiction; of Taine and Renan in historical study and criticism; of Fromentin in the criticism of art; of Scherer, Brunetière, Faguet, Lemaître, in the criticism of literature.

The dominant fact, if we discern it aright, has been the scientific influence, turning poetry from romantic egoism to objective art, directing the novel and the drama to naturalism and to the study of social environments, informing history and criticism with the spirit of curiosity, and prompting research for laws of evolution. Whether the spiritualist tendency observable at the present moment be a symptom of languor and fatigue, or the indication of a new moral energy, future years will determine.

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The works of Mr. Saintsbury, Géruzez, Demogeot, are widely known, and have proved useful during many years. Much may be learnt and learnt pleasantly from Paul Albert's volumes on the literature of the sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. Two volumes out of five of M. Charles Gidel's *Histoire de la Littérature française* (Lemerre) are occupied with literature from 1815 to 1886. M. Hermann Pergamini's *Histoire générale de la Littérature française* (Alcan) sometimes gives fresh and interesting views. For a short school history by an accomplished scholar, none is better than M. Petit de Julleville's *Histoire de la Littérature française*, which, in 555 pages, packs a great deal of information. The *Histoire élémentaire de la Littérature française*, by M. Jean Fleury, has been popular; it tells much of the contents of great books, and makes no assumption that the reader is already acquainted with them. Dr. Warren's *A Primer of French Literature* (Heath, Boston, U.S.A.) is well proportioned and well arranged, but it has room for little more than names, dates, and the briefest characterisations. Dr. Wells's *Modern French Literature* (Roberts, Boston, U.S.A.) sketches French literature to

Chateaubriand, and treats with considerable fulness the literature from Chateaubriand and Mme. de Staël to the present time. For the present century M. G. Pellissier's *Le Mouvement littéraire au XIX^e^ Siècle* is valuable.

Of elder histories that by Nisard is by far the most distinguished, the work of a scholar and a thinker. (See p. 425 of the present volume.)

The student will find Merlet's *Études littéraires sur les Classiques français* (2 vols.), revised and enlarged by M. Lintilhac, highly instructive; the second volume is wholly occupied with Corneille, Racine, and Molière.

For the history of the French theatre the best introduction is M. Petit de Julleville's *Le Théâtre en France;* it may be supplemented by M. Brunetière's *Les Époques du Théâtre français.* Learning wide and exact, and original thought, characterise all the work of M. Brunetière; each of his many volumes should be searched by the student for what he may need. The studies of M. Faguet on the writers of the sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries are the work of a critic who is penetrating in his psychological study of authors, and who, just or unjust, is always suggestive. For numberless little monographs the student may turn to Sainte-Beuve. Monographs on a larger scale will be found in the admirable series of *Grands Écrivains français* (Hachette); the *Classiques populaires* (Lecène, Oudin et Cie.) are in some instances no less scholarly. The writings of Scherer, of M. Jules Lemaître, and of M. Anatole France are especially valuable on nineteenth-century literature. The best study of French historical literature is Professor Flint's *The Philosophy of History* (1893).

Provided with such books as these the student will hardly need the general histories of French literature by German writers. I may name Prof. Bornhak's *Geschichte der Französischen Literatur,* and the more popular history by Engel (4th ed., 1897). Lotheissen's *Geschichte der Französischen Literatur im XVII. Jahrhundert* seems to me the best book on the period. The monographs in German are numberless.

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INDEX

ABONDANCE, Jean d', 75
Adam de la Halle, 26, 27, 72
Alarcon, 167
Albéric de Briancon, 17
Alexis, Vie de Saint, 4
Amadis des Gaules, 23, 92
Amis et Amiles, 12
Amyot, Jacques, 96–97
Andrieux, 336
Anne of Austria, 201
Argenson, Marquis d', 304 *note*
Armentières, Peronne d', 59
Arnauld, Antoine, 153, 156 157, 184, 185, 215
Arnauld, Jacqueline, 155
Arnault, 335
Arouet, *see* Voltaire
Aubigné, Agrippa d', 112, 113, 115, 117–119
Aucassin et Nicolette, 22
Aulnoy, Mme. d', 243
Auvergne, Martial d', 63

BAÏF, Antoine de, 98, 103
Ballanche, 357
Baltus, 245
Balzac, Guez de, 149–150, 177
Balzac, Honoré de, 404–408
Baour-Lormian, 336, 337
Barante, 412
Barbier, Auguste, 391
Barbieri, Nicolo, 198
Barlaam et Joasaph, 5
Barnave, 339
Baron, 207, 229, 262
Bartas, Du, 117
Barthélémy, Abbé, 329
Basoche, La, 76
Bassompierre, 239
Batteux, Charles, 306
Baude, Henri, 63
Bayle, Pierre, 243–245
Beaulieu, Geoffroy de, 51
Beaumarchais, 265, 323–325
Béjart, Armande, 200
Béjart, Madeleine, 198
Bellay, Jean du, 88
Bellay, Joachim du, 98, 99, 100, 104–105
Belleau, Remi, 98, 103–104
Benedictines, the, 254
Benoit de Sainte-More, 15
Benserade, 140, 208
Béranger, J.-P. de, 366–367
Berçuire, Pierre, 46
Bernard, 258
Bernard, Saint, 44
Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, 272, 325–329
Bernay, Alexandre de, 16
Bernis, 258
Béroul, 19
Bertaut, Jean, 106
Bertin, 258
Beyle, Henri, 366, 398–399
Bèze, Théodore de, 94, 107
Bichat, 341
Bien-Avisé, Mal-Avisé, 72
Blanc, Louis, 412
Blois, Gui de, 54
Bodel, Jean, 67
Bodin, Jean, 111

Boétie, La, 96, 122
Boileau, Nicolas, 183–189, 241, 242
Boisguillebert, 304
Boissonade, J.-F., 354
Bolingbroke, 284
Bonald, Vicomte de, 357
Bonnet, Charles, 302 *note*
Bossuet, Jacques-Bénigne, 139, 153, 202, 219–226, 233, 276
Bouillon, Duchesse de, 190, 191, 214
Bounin, Gabriel, 107
Bourdaloue, 202, 227
Boursault, 207
Brantôme, 113–114
Bretel, Jacques, 26
Brizeux, Auguste, 391
Buchanan, 106
Budé, Guillaume, 82, 87
Buffon, 308–310, 327
Bunbury, Lydia, 373
Bussy-Rabutin, 176, 179

Cabanis, 301
Calas, Jean, 287
Calvin, Jean, 92–94
Campan, Mme. de, 253
Campistron, 259
Camus, Bishop, 132, 141
Cantillon, 305
Cato, Angelo, 56
Caumartin, de, 283
Caumartin, Mme. de, 176
Caylus, Count de, 329
Caylus, Mme. de, 253
Cent Nouvelles nouvelles, 66
Chamfort, 322
Chapelain, Jean, 141, 147, 149, 162, 177, 186
Chapelle, 153, 184, 192
Charles, Mme., 368
Charron, Pierre, 126–127
Chartier, Alain, 60–61
Chastelain, Georges, 65
Chateaubriand, 328, 343, 348–353
Châtelain de Couci, the, 27
Châtelet, Mme. du, 285, 286
Chaulieu, 256
Chênedollé, 337
Chénier, André, 329–331, 338
Chénier, Marie-Joseph, 335, 337
Chesterfield, Lord, 275
Chrestien, 116
Chrétien de Troyes, 17, 21
Christine de Pisan, 60
Clari, Robert de, 49
Clermont, Mlle. de, 275
Collin d'Harleville, 336
Commines, Philippe de, 55–57
Comte, Auguste, 255, 360–361
Condillac, 301
Condorcet, 255, 303–304
Confrérie de la Passion, 68, 71, 160
Conon de Béthune, 27
Conrart, Valentin, 147
Constant, Benjamin, 345, 411
Coquillard, 63
Coras, 214
Corneille, Pierre, 139, 163–170, 204
Corneille, Thomas, 171–172, 206
Cotin, 186, 205
Coulanges, Abbé de, 177
Coulanges, Mme. de, 179
Courier, Paul-Louis, 354–355
Cousin Victor, 358–359
Crebillon, P. J. de, 259–260
Crétin, 65
Creusé de Lesser, 337
Cuvier, 341
Cuvier, Le, 75
Cyrano de Bergerac, 145–146, 197

Dacier, Mme., 243
D'Aguesseau, 299
D'Alembert, 254, 295
Danchet, 259
Dancourt, 262
Dangeau, 239
Daniel, 254
Danse Macabré, 63
Danton, 338, 339
Daubenton, 309
Daunou, 411
Daurat, Jean, 98
Débats, Journal de, 338

De Belloy, 261
De Broglie, 412
Décade Philosophique, 338
De Féletz, 342
Deffand, Mme. du, 253, 322
Déforis, 221
Delatouche, 401
Delavigne, Casimir, 395
Delille, 257–258
Désaugiers, 336
Désbordes-Valmore, Mme., 391
Descartes, René, 150–153
Deschamps, Antony, 366
Deschamps, Émile, 366
Desfontaines, 300
Désmarets de St.-Sorlin, 141, 142, 144, 197, 241
Des-Masures, Loys, 107
Desmoulins, Camille, 338
Desportes, Philippe, 105–106, 137
Despréaux, *see* Boileau
Destouches, 263
Diderot, Denis, 254, 265, 272, 294–299, 302, 313
Digulleville, Guillaume de, 43
Döllinger, 180
Dorat, 258
Dubos, Abbé, 305
Duché, 259
Ducis, 261
Duclos, 253
Dudevant, Mme., *see* Sand, George
Dufresny, 262, 274
Dumas, Alexandre, 394, 397
Dumont, Abbé, 370
Dupont de Nemours, 304
Duplessis-Mornay, 115
Du Ryer, 162, 170
Dussault, 342
Duval, 336

Eneas, 16
Enfants san Souci, 74, 76
Épinay, Mme. d', 253, 314
Estienne, Henri, 101 *note*, 110, 115
Estissac, Geoffroy d', 87
Estoile, Pierre de l', 114 *note*
Étienne, 336

Fabre d'Eglantine, 336
Fantosme, Jordan, 47
Fauchet, Claude, 110
Fauriel, 341
Fayette, Mme. de la, 174, 179, 180–182
Fénelon, 153, 230–234
Fléchier, 140, 228
Fleury, 225
Floovent, 8
Florian, 259, 272
Fontanes, 337, 349
Fontenelle, 242, 243–245
Foucher, Adèle, 375
Fougères, Étienne de, 42
Foulechat, Denis, 46
Fouquet, 190, 200
Fourier, 359
Fournival, Richard de, 41
Franc-Archer de Bagnolet, 74
Francis I., 82
Frederick the Great, 286, 288
Fréron, 300
Froissart, Jean, 53–55
Furetière, Antoine, 145, 211

Gace Brulé, 27
Gaimar, 47
Gaime, Abbé, 312
Galiani, 254, 305
Galland, 274
Garnier, Robert, 108
Garnier de Pont-Sainte-Maxence, 6, 47
Gassendi, Pierre, 153
Gautier, Théophile, 365, 387–390, 392
Gautier de Coinci, 6
Gelée, Jacquemart, 31
Gens Nouveaux, 74
Geoffrin, Mme., 254
Geoffroi of Brittany, 28
Geoffroy, 342
Gerson, 44, 45
Gilbert, 258–259, 300
Gillot, 116

Ginguené, 341, 411
Girardin, M. de, 315
Girardin, Saint-Marc, 425
Godeau, 139
Goethe, 297, 345
Gombault, 142
Gomberville, 142
Gournay, 305
Gournay, Mlle. de, 123
Grandes Chroniques, 50
Greban, Arnoul, 69
Greban, Simon, 69
Grécourt, 258
Gresset, 258, 260, 263
Grévin, 107
Grignan, Mme. de, 178
Grimm, Melchior, 307
Gringoire, Pierre, 74
Grisélidis, Histoire de, 68
Guenée, Abbé, 300
Guevara, 267
Guillaume le Clerc, 42
Guillaume le Maréchal, Vie de, 47
Guirlande de Julie, 140
Guizot, François, 412, 414-416
Guyon, Mme., 224, 230

HAMILTON, Anthony, 256
Hardouin, 254
Hardy, Alexandre, 161
Helgaire, 8
Helvétius, 301
Hénault, 261
Henri le Glichezare, 30
Herberay des Essarts, 92
Hoffman, 342
Holbach, Baron d', 302
Hospital, Michel de l', 100, 115
Hotman, François, 114
Houdetot, Mme. d', 314, 318
Huet, 242
Hugo, Victor, 365, 375-383, 391-393, 396
Hume, David, 315

JACOT DE FOREST, 16
Jansen, 156
Jeannin, President, 114 *note*
Jehan de Thuin, 16
Jobelins, 140
Jodelle, 98, 103, 107
Joinville, Jean de, 50-52
Joubert, Joseph, 342-343, 349
Jouffroy, Théodore, 359

LA BARRE, 288
Labé, Louise, 97
La Beaumelle, 179
Laboureur, Louis le, 141
La Bruyère, 235-238, 242
La Calprenède, 142, 143
Lacordaire, 357, 358
La Fare, 256
La Fontaine, Jean de, 189-195
La Fosse, 259
Lagrange, 302
La Grange-Chancel, 259
Laharpe, 261, 306-307
La Haye, Fragment of, 9
Lally, Count, 288
Lamarck, 341
Lamartine, Alphonse de, 329, 367-371
Lambert, Marquise de, 254, 269
Lambert le Tort, 16
Lamennais, 357-358
La Mettrie, 300-301
Lamoignon, de, 202
La Motte-Houdart, 243, 256, 260
Languet, Hubert, 114
Lanoue, 113
Laplace, 341
Larivey, Pierre de, 109
La Rochefoucauld, 173-175, 181, 18
Latini, Brunetto, 41
Laya, Louis, 336
Le Bel, Jean, 53
Lebrun, Écouchard, 258, 337
Le Clerc, 214
Lecomte, Valleran, 160
Lefranc de Pompignan, 256
Lefranc, Martin, 62
Legouais, Chrétien, 17, 58
Legouvé, 335

Le Maire de Belges, Jean, 84
Lemercier, Népomucène, 336, 337
Lemierre, 258, 260
Lemoyne, 141
L'Empereur qui tua son Neveu, 73
Leroy, Pierre, 116
Lesage, 262, 266–268
Lespinasse, Mlle. de, 254, 322
Letourneur, 261
Le Vasseur, Thérèse, 313
Lille, Alain de, 37
Lorens, Friar, 41
Lorris, Guillaume de, 34–36
Lyonne, Abbé de, 266

MABLY, 255
Machaut, Guillaume de, 59
Maillard, Olivier, 45
Maine de Biran, 341
Maintenon, Mme. de, 118, 145, 179–180, 216, 217
Mairet, Jean de, 162, 165, 196
Maistre, Joseph de, 355–356
Maistre, Xavier de, 409
Malebranche, Nicolas de, 153
Malherbe, François de, 100, 106, 134–136, 331
Mallet du Pin, 338
Marbode, Bishop, 41
Marguerite of Navarre, 82–84
Marguerite of Navarre (wife of Henri IV.), 114
Marie de France, 20, 28
Marivaux, 262, 269–271
Marmontel, 253, 260, 272, 300, 305–306
Marnix de Ste. Aldegonde, 115
Mascaron, 228
Massillon, J.-B., 228, 229
Maupertuis, 286
Maynard, 136
Melin de Saint-Gelais, 86, 105
Ménage, 177, 205
Ménagier de Paris, 41 *note*
Mendoza, 267
Menot, Michel, 45
Mercier, 265
Méri, Huon de, 43
Mérimée, Prosper, 396, 408–410
Meschinot, 65
Meun, Jean de, 36–39
Mézeray, 225
Michaud, 411
Michel, Jean, 69
Michelet, Jules, 412, 418–422
Mignet, François, 412, 416
Millevoye, 337
Mirabeau, 339–340
Mirabeau (the elder), 281, 305
Miracles de Notre-Dame, 68
Molière, Jean-Baptiste, 146, 169, 197–206
Molinet, 65
Monluc, Blaize de, 112–113
Monstrelet, 55
Montaigne, Michel de, 121–126
Montalembert, 357, 358, 412
Montchrestien, Antoine de, 120, 160
Montesquieu, 57, 111, 255, 273–280
Montfleury, 207
Montpensier, Mlle. de, 176, 235
Montreuil, Jean de, 46
Moreau, Hégésippe, 391
Morellet, 300, 305
Morelly, 255
Mornay, Mme. de, 113
Mothe le Vayer, la, 153
Motteville, Mme. de, 176
Muret, 106
Musset, Alfred de, 383–387

NAIGEON, 302
Namur, Robert of, 54
Nangis, Guillaume de, 51
Napoleon I., 340
Napoleon III., 369
Navagero, 105
Nerval, Gérard de, 388, 391
Nevers, Duc de, 214
Nicole, 156, 178, 208, 209, 215
Ninon, 183
Nisard, Désiré, 425–426
Nivart of Ghent, 30
Nivelle de la Chaussée, 264

Nodier, Charles, 366, 409
Novare, Philippe de, 41

Ogier, François, 162
Oresme, Nicole, 46
Orléans, Charles d', 61-62
Orleans, Duchess of, 180, 212
Ossat, d', 114 *note*
Ouville, d', 196
Ozanam, 412

Palissot, 300
Palissy, Bernard, 119
Paré, Ambroise, 119
Parny, 258
Partenopéus de Blois, 22
Pascal, Blaise, 154-159
Pasquier, Estienne, 110
Passerat, Jean, 106, 116
Pathelin, La Farce de, 66, 75-76
Pèlerinage de Jérusalem, 11
Pellisson, 148
Périer, Mme., 158
Périers, Bonaventure des, 84, 91
Perrault, Charles, 241-242, 243
Perron, du, 115
Physiocrats, the, 304
Picard, 336
Piron, 258, 260, 263, 300
Pithou, 116
Pixérécourt, 336
Pomponne, 179
Ponsard, 395
Popelinière, L. de la, 112
Poquelin. *See* Molière
Port-Royal, 155, 252
Pradon, 214
Presles, Raoul de, 46
Prévost, Abbé, 271-272
Proudhon, Pierre Joseph, 361-362
Provins, Guiot de, 42

Quesnay, François, 304, 305
Quinault, Philippe, 169, 204, 206, 207-208
Quinet, Edgar, 412, 422-423
Quinze Joies de Mariage, 66

Rabelais, François, 87-91
Racan, 136
Racine, Jean, 172, 208-218
Racine, Louis, 257
Rambouillet, Hôtel de, 139
Ramée, Pierre de la, 111
Ramond, 321 *note*
Raoul de Houdan, 43
Rapin, 116
Raynal, Abbé, 321-322
Rayounard, 336, 341
Récamier, Mme., 352
Récits d'un Ménestrel de Reims, 50
Regnard, 262
Regnier, Mathurin, 136-138
Renard, Roman de, 29
Représentation d'Adam, 67
Restif de la Bretonne, 272
Retz, Cardinal de, 175-176
Riccoboni, Mme., 270 *note*
Richelieu, 147, 162, 176
Rivarol, 338
Robert de Boron, 21, 22
Rocca, Albert de, 347
Rohan, Chevalier de, 284
Rojas, 106
Roland, Mme., 253, 254, 322
Roland, Song of, 9-11
Rollin, 300
Romulus, 28 *note*
Ronsard, Pierre de, 97-103
Rotrou, Jean, 162, 170-171, 196
Roucher, 257
Rouget de Lisle, 337
Rousseau, Jean-Baptiste, 256, 283
Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, 272, 311-321, 327
Roye, Jean de, 55
Royer-Collard, 341
Rutebeuf, 42, 43

Sable, Mme. de, 173
Sablière, Mme. de, 192
Sacy, de, 156
Sagon, 85
Saint-Amand, 144
Saint-Cyran, 156

Sainte-Beuve, 330, 365, 366, 391, 426–427
Saint-Évremond, 139, 183, 197, 209
Saint-Just, 339
Saint-Lambert, 257
Saint-Martin, 355, 357
Saint-Pierre, Abbé de, 304
Saint-Simon, Claude-Henri de, 359–360
Saint-Simon, Duc de, 238–241
Sales, François de, 131–132
Salle, Antoine de la, 65–66
Sand, George, 400–404
Sandeau, Jules, 401
Sannazaro, 103
Saurin, Bernard-Joseph, 261
Saurin, Jacques, 228
Scarron, Paul, 145, 197
Scève, Maurice, 97
Schelandre, Jean de, 162
Schiller, 345
Schlegel, A. W. von, 346
Scribe, Eugène, 395
Scudéry, Georges de, 142, 162, 163, 165, 170
Scudéry, Mlle. de, 92, 142, 143
Sebonde, Raimond de, 122
Secchi, 199
Sedaine, 265
Segrais, 181, 213, 235
Sénancourt, 341–342
Serres, Olivier de, 119, 132
Serviteur, Le Loyal, 112 *note*
Sévigné, Mme. de, 143, 177–179, 191, 210
Simon, Richard, 220, 224, 225
Sirven, 288
Sismondi, 411–412
Sorel, Charles, 144, 268
Soulié, Frédéric, 394
Soyecourt, Marquis de, 200
Staël-Delaunay, Mme. de, 253
Staël, Mme. de, 343–348
Steinhœwel, 28
Stendhal. *See* Beyle
Strasburg Oaths, 4
Suard, 338
Sue, Eugène, 397
Sully, Maurice de, 44
Surgères, Helène de, 101

TABARIN, 196
Taille, Jacques de la, 107
Taille, Jean de la, 108, 109
Tedbalt, 4
Tencin, Mme. de, 245
Thaon, Philippe de, 40
Thebes, Romance of, 15
Théophile, 68
Thibaut de Champagne, 27
Thierry, Augustin, 412–414
Thiers, Adolphe, 412, 417–418
Thomas (Anglo-Norman poet), 19
Thomas, A.-L., 306, 327
Thou, De, 112
Thyard, Pontus de, 98
Tocqueville, A. de, 412, 416–417
Tour-Landry, Livre du Chevalier de la, 41 *note*
Touroude, 10
Tracy, Destutt de, 301
Tristan l'Hermite, 162, 170
Turgot, 255
Turnèbe, Odet de, 109

URANISTES, 140
Urfe, Honoré d', 92, 132–134

VAIR, Guillaume de, 120, 127, 134
Valenciennes, Henri de, 49
Vallière, Louise de la, 221
Van Dale, 244
Vauban, 304
Vaugelas, 148
Vauquelin de la Fresnaye, Jean, 106
Vauvenargues, 281–282
Vaux, Mme. Clothilde de, 360
Velly, 254
Vergniaud, 339
Vertot, 254
Viau, Théophile de, 138
Vigny, Alfred de, 365, 371–374, 394, 396
Villehardouin, Geoffroy de, 48

Villemain, 424
Villon, François, 63-65, 74
Vincent de Paul, St., 221
Viole, Mlle. de, 104
Violette, Roman de la, 22
Viret, 94
Vivonne, Catherine de, 139
Voiture, Vincent, 139, 140–141
Volland, Mlle., 298
Volney, 303
Voltaire, 229, 253, 255, 260, 272, 282-293, 314

WACE, 20, 47
Walpole, Horace, 322
Warens, Mme. de, 311, 312, 318
Wenceslas, Duke, 54

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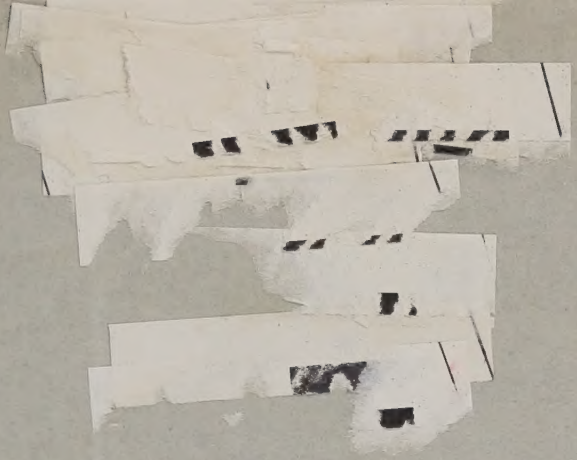

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